

Minnow

a screenplay

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF INNSMOUTH - NIGHT

Pre-dawn darkness. A number of World War I military-style trucks and 1920s cars, their headlights on, drive along a narrow two-lane highway over the crest of a hill.

EXT. INNSMOUTH STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: INNSMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS. NOVEMBER 1927.

An uneven cobblestone street of tumbledown frame houses and brick buildings, many with windows boarded up. The street is feebly lit by a few dim lamps. The caravan of trucks and cars goes rattling by.

EXT. INNSMOUTH TOWN GREEN - DAY

As the first light of dawn is breaking, the trucks in the caravan come to a stop at the green. A large colonial-era Masonic Hall, in better repair than most other buildings there, stands at one end of the green.

Many of the cars drive on.

U.S. Marines, in combat uniforms and helmets typical of the 1920s pour out of the trucks. A SERGEANT barks out an order.

SERGEANT

Form up!

The Marines form up in rows of four, three platoons in all. They have officers with them. One of these officers, CAPTAIN WILSON stands in front of them.

CAPTAIN WILSON

(to Sergeant)

Order fix bayonets.

SERGEANT

(bellowed order)

Fix bayonets!

The Marines fix bayonets. Meanwhile Captain Wilson confers with three lieutenants over a map.

CAPTAIN WILSON

Able platoon with me and Lieutenant Albright.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN WILSON (cont'd)
We're going to storm the Esoteric
Order of Dagon Hall over there.
Baker platoon with Lieutenant
Fredricks to seize the Marsh Refinery
and quell any resistance encountered.
Lieutenant Ward, Charlie platoon is
in reserve with you for now. We'll
send a runner if we need help. Let's
move out!

Able and Baker platoons set off at a double-quick march in
opposite directions.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ORDER OF DAGON HALL - DAY

The front door of a pillared hall with faded paint. A group
of marines with Captain Wilson among them surrounds the
front door as one of them chops at it with an axe. When the
door is sufficiently weakened the axe-wielding Marine kicks
it in.

CAPTAIN WILSON
(gesturing with his
raised Colt .45
automatic)
Move in!

A number of Marines charge through the door with their
rifles. In the distance we hear muffled PISTOL SHOTS
answered by the much louder and nearer return rifle fire of
the Marines.

EXT. CHURCH BASEMENT DOOR - DAY

Outside an old and clumsy Gothic church, a Marine with a pry
bar forces open the door. In the darkness within we see the
muzzle flash of a Tommy gun and hear its report
RATATATATATATA.

One Marine in the way of the gun falls wounded. His comrades
quickly drag him out of the line of fire.

A CORPORAL plasters himself to the wall on the side of the
door. He takes a grenade off his belt, pulls its pin, and
throws it into the dark space beyond the door.

CORPORAL
(loud, to be heard
over gunfire)
Fire in the hole!

There is an ear-shattering BLAST and flash as the grenade goes off, silencing the Tommy gunner.

The Marines charge into the space with their rifles.

EXT. INNSMOUTH RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Two Massachusetts State Troopers, WRIGHT and GREEN, are carefully making their way down a street in a slum neighborhood. Wright is holding a police dog on a leash.

Most houses on both sides are low, leaning wooden affairs that appears to be abandoned and have been boarded up.

The dog points, looking at a particular boarded up house. Both its front door and its windows are covered by boards.

Trooper Wright allows the dog to walk him over to the front door. The dog paws at the door and whines.

The troopers lean toward the door and listen, Faintly, from inside, they can hear the GASPS and MOANS of a woman having sex.

Trooper Green takes his nightstick off his belt and levers the sheet of wood covering the door off its nails, exposing the rotten, hanging door underneath.

The Troopers draw their revolvers. Trooper Green then kicks in the front door.

On a filthy mattress, caught in the rectangle of light from the streets, a WENCH is on all fours, her skirt hitched up over her back to expose her buttocks. She stares, dazed, into the unexpected daylight.

A vague shape is already disappearing down a set of stairs.

THE POLICE DOG

It is growling ferociously and exposing its teeth.

BACK TO SCENE

The police dog surges forward, so hard that it snaps its lead.

TROOPER WRIGHT

Duke, no!

The dog, barking furiously, takes off after the figure that was receding down the stairs. The troopers surge into the house. Trooper Green points his revolver at the Wench.

TROOPER GREEN

You don't go anywhere, girlie.

The Wench slumps submissively.

There is a horrific YELP from down the stairs. Trooper Wright takes a flashlight off his belt and picks his way down the stairs.

THE POLICE DOG

At the base of the stairs, the police dog lies in a rapidly expanding pool of blood, WHINING, with three deep slash wounds across its throat.

TROOPER WRIGHT

His face registers horror, also anger at the loss of the dog.

TROOPER WRIGHT

Jesus...

FLASHLIGHT BEAM

In the light of the flashlight, as Trooper Wright moves it along the basement floor, we see bloody footprints leading away from the dog. The footprints don't look human. They look more like something that might be made by a giant frog.

EXT. OUTSIDE INNSMOUTH POORHOUSE - DAY

A gray 1926 Chrysler Imperial pulls up in front of the Innsmouth Poorhouse. This is a shabby, two-story brick building with POORHOUSE written on the lintel over its front door.

Agents WHITE and HARRIS get out of the Imperial. These are men in classic G-man attire: long coats, suits, hats. They walk up to the front door. Agent White KNOCKS vigorously.

The front door is opened by the KEEPER, an unpleasant looking, pinch-faced middle-aged man.

KEEPER

What do you want?

AGENT WHITE
We're Federal officers, sir. And
this...

(handing the Keeper a
set of papers)
...is a warrant.

The Agents push past the Keeper and enter the Poorhouse.
The Keeper squints at the warrant, betraying no particular
comprehension of its contents.

INT. BUNKROOM IN THE POORHOUSE - DAY

A handful of derelict men lie on narrow cots in a shabby,
ill-lit room. As Agents White and Harris enter, an ELDERLY
DERELICT attempts to hide a mostly-empty bottle under a thin
blanket.

AGENT WHITE
(to Elderly Derelict)
You needn't worry about that, old-
timer. We're not Prohibition Men.
(to the room
generally)
No, gentlemen, we are not. We work
for a living.

There is a little LAUGHTER from the derelict men at this
witticism. The derelict men relax a little.

AGENT WHITE (cont'd)
We are instead with a different
Federal outfit, the Bureau of
Investigation. And we are
investigating something. I am Agent
White, and my colleague here is Agent
Harris. Agent Harris here has a
little proposition for you all.
Agent Harris?

AGENT HARRIS
Thank you, Agent White.

Agent Harris reaches into his coat and pulls out a Saint-
Gaudens twenty-dollar gold piece which he holds up for
everyone in the room to see.

AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)
This, gentlemen, is a twenty-dollar
gold piece.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP THE COIN

Agent Harris turns it in his fingers so that we can see both its front and back sides.

AGENT HARRIS (O.S.)
I would reckon this is more money
than many of you have seen in quite
some time.

BACK TO SCENE

AGENT HARRIS
Now as it happens, I have five of
these lovelies which I am prepared to
give away to the man who provides us
with the right information.

The men rise on their cots, leaning forward, eager to hear what Agent Harris has to say next.

AGENT HARRIS
One hundred dollars, gentlemen.
Think of it.

Agent Harris flips the coin in front of a YOUNGISH DERELICT, then catches it again. The Youngish Derelict's eyes follow the coin like a cat watching a particularly tasty bird.

AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)
Enough to get a man cleaned up and
back on his feet, if he wants.

In the corner, Elderly Derelict tenderly cradles his near-empty whiskey bottle.

AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)
Enough to buy a lot of bootleg liquor
otherwise. I'm not here to preach at
anyone.

Agent Harris puts the coin away.

AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)
All we want in return is for you to
help us to find someone.

YOUNGISH DERELICT
And who would that be, Mr. Agent Sir?

AGENT HARRIS
We are looking for one Mr. Zadok
Allen.

The room turns to ice. The various derelicts turn away. Something like fear covers their expression.

AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)
Nobody knows about Zadok Allen?

ELDERLY DERELICT
We all knows him, but ain't nobody here seen Zadok Allen for many a month.

AGENT WHITE
No one knows?

ELDERLY DERELICT
Old man was crazy and drunk whenever he could be. Probably fell into the sea and got swept out by the tide.

AGENT WHITE
And?

ELDERLY DERELICT
Got nothin' more to say.

The body language of the other derelicts indicates that none of them have anything to say either. Agents White and Harris exchange glances.

EXT. INNSMOUTH TOWN GREEN - DAY

A gloomy, cloudy, late afternoon.

Two state troopers, seen from behind, march a PRISONER with his hands tied behind his back up to a formation of other prisoners, all kneeling. The Prisoner is made to kneel with them.

None of the prisoner's faces are visible. In some cases their heads are covered by hoods.

Several dozen yards away Agent White is talking with Captain Wilson. Agent White is making notes on a clipboard. The formation of prisoners, guarded by Marines and State Troopers with shotguns and Tommy guns, is visible in the distance.

AGENT WHITE
Over two hundred prisoners, all told. The hostiles took a lot of fatalities.

A HEAP OF BODIES UNDER A TARP

BACK TO SCENE

CAPTAIN WILSON
We took some of our own, Agent White.

MORE BODIES

These are laid out neatly at another part of the Green, covered with individual tarps. By the boots projecting under them it appears that three of them are former Marines, another a former State Trooper.

AGENT WHITE (O.S.)
I see. Four more survivor's pensions.

BACK TO SCENE

Agent White and Captain Wilson. A number of Z-29 model buses are pulling up behind them.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Transport is arriving, Agent White.

AGENT WHITE
We're not moving them out until well after dark, Captain Wilson. There are certain things we don't want decent people exposed to.

CAPTAIN WILSON
No one wants to remain in this town after dark, Agent White. We could always black up the windows.

AGENT WHITE
You could, Captain. But you can't block out their smell.

INSERT - SPINNING NEWSPAPER

The Boston Post, Sunday December 4. Large headline: HUGE FEDERAL RAID IN ESSEX CO. SEAPORT with subheads A VICTORY IN THE WAR ON LIQUOR? And HUNDREDS OF PRISONERS TAKEN.

INT. GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A very well appointed conference room -- polished dark wood and soft carpets -- inside a government building.

One one side of the table sit JOHN G. SARGENT (the Attorney-General of the United States) and a young J. EDGAR HOOVER.

SUPER: WASHINGTON D.C., SPRING 1928

HOOVER

I understand why we have to talk to the Jew, but do we really have to let that colored boy in here?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"That colored boy" you refer to, Mr. Hoover, is not only a minister of religion and a member of the Bar but the chairman of the National Committee for the Protection of People of Color.

Hoover shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL (cont'd)

It might not be your preference but this is a matter of national security and it is important that we have all Americans on our side for this. And colored people will listen when Reverend Porter speaks. Do you understand that?

HOOVER

Yes, Attorney-General.

There is a soft KNOCK at the conference-room door. An AIDE lets in MASON GOLDBERG and REVEREND ISAIAH PORTER. Goldberg is a small pale man, Porter a large African-American with a café-au-lait complexion. Both are meticulously dressed and groomed.

The Attorney-General rises, followed by Hoover and shakes both men's hands. He is followed in this by Hoover, who looks very ill-at-ease in doing so.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Dr. Goldberg? Reverend Porter?
Thank you for coming to see us. I take it you know Mr. Hoover here, our new head of the Bureau of Investigation.

GOLDBERG

We have heard of Mr. Hoover, yes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
Won't you gentlemen please be seated?

Everyone sits.

GOLDBERG
Attorney-General Sargent, I hope you do not find our visit here to be too much of an imposition.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
Not at all, Dr. Goldberg. We understand entirely that the National Council for Civil Liberties would have concerns about the the Innsmouth Affair.

GOLDBERG
Please understand, sir. We understand that issues of national security might be at stake. We are as patriotic as any American. But when several hundred people are arrested and then there are no reports of any subsequent legal proceedings...

PORTER
We of course have been briefed by your medical officers about possible disease or hereditary degeneration. With all due respect, you must expect some skepticism.

Hoover looks like he can barely conceal his desire to see Porter hanged, but the Attorney-General remains affable.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
Gentlemen, we entirely understand, which is why we have arranged a small outing for your benefit. I think you will find that seeing is believing.

INT. A MARBLE FRONT-ENTRY FOYER - DAY

The Attorney-General is walking accompanied by Goldberg and Porter, speaking to them as they go. Hoover and the Aide trail behind.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
The trip is not long, and we have arranged a car...

CLOSE-UP ON HOOVER

HOOVER
(confidentially to
the Aide)
Make sure that files are opened on
both Lawyer Goldberg and Preacher
Porter.

AIDE
Yes, sir.

EXT. QUARANTINE CAMP - DAY

A concentration camp by another name. Low barracks are surrounded by barbed-wire fencing, guard towers with machine guns, guards with dogs between rows of fencing, the lot.

Hoover, the Attorney-General, Goldberg, and Porter stand outside a perimeter fence.

PORTER
We're not to be allowed in?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
We think it best for security's sake that you remain out here, Reverend. You will, of course, be allowed to inspect the prisoners, speaking of which, here comes the Commandant now.

The Commandant, a weary-looking man in the uniform of a U.S. Army Colonel (one sleeve of which is empty and pinned up, indicating an amputated arm) approaches.

COMMANDANT
Attorney-General, sir.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
Ah, Commandant. Can you bring the prisoners forth for inspection?

COMMANDANT
I must ask you again, sir, whether you think this is a really good idea.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
National security is at stake, Commandant.

COMMANDANT
Very well, sir.

The Commandant takes out a whistle and blows three short blasts on it.

Inside the camp, a GUARD opens a door to one of the barracks.

GUARD
(practically barking
the order)
Parade out!

VIEW OF THE FOUR MEN THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE

There is a background SHUFFLING sound as the prisoners are led out. Goldberg's and Porter's expressions, initially composed, register ever-increasing disgust and dismay.

There is a GLUB GLUB sound followed by the CRACK of a whip and a SHRIEK. Hoover smirks when this happens.

PORTER
Lord Jesus preserve us.

GOLDBERG
(covering his nose
with a pocket
handkerchief)
The smell...

INSERT - SPINNING NEWSPAPER

The Boston Post, Saturday, April 14, 1928. Large headline
DANCE HALL EXPLOSION KILLS 40 IN MISSOURI.

There is an animation and a zoom in to Page 13, small headline below the fold. CIVIL LIBERTIES ORGANIZATIONS CONCLUDE PROBE OF INNSMOUTH AFFAIR.

INT./EXT. - NEW HOPE PLANTATION - DAY

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN NORTH AMERICA, A CENTURY LATER

(Note: All of the permanent residents of New Hope Plantation are white, and with a few exceptions all of them are women and girls. They are generally good-looking for whatever age they are, in a healthy, outdoorsy, unpainted sort of way. They tend to wear simple cotton dresses and shifts, some of them embroidered with folk designs: flowers, hearts, animals, etc. They generally go barefoot (especially the younger ones) or wear simple sandals.

Also unless otherwise specifically noted they have nothing on their persons or in their built environment that could not be found on a modest mid-nineteenth century farmstead -- no running water or electric anything.)

MONTAGE - LIFE ON THE PLANTATION

- Inside a dark barn, lit by a single old-fashioned oil lamp hanging from the rafters, a pretty teenage girl milks a cow.

- In bright morning sunlight, women and girls picking vegetables (squash, tomatoes) in a lush green garden.

- Women and girls picking peaches in an orchard. Little girls have climbed in the tree and are tossing peaches down to women who catch them and put them in baskets. They act as if this is fun, with smiles and laughter.

- Inside a stone building (the COOKHOUSE), women engage in cookery tasks. One is churning butter. Others are baking bread and pies in large wood-fired ovens. In the corner, a baby lies in a bassinet being rocked by an old lady. The baby cries. Her mother comes over to breast-feed her.

- Two teams of girls, about ages ten to twelve, in an open field playing soccer. They are barefoot and wearing shifts. The two teams are distinguished by one wearing bonnets and the other not. One of the players is MINNOW (at this time about 10), and the game is being refereed by her older sister TABITHA (about 14).

- More work in the cookhouse, this time women cutting meat and chopping vegetables and herbs and putting them in a huge stewpot which bubbles over a wood-fire.

EXT. THE SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Tabitha BLOWS a whistle, then calls out.

TABITHA

That's the end of the game. The final score is Bares 4, Bonnets 3.

Some GROANS of disappointment from some of the Bonnets.

TABITHA (cont'd)

The supper bell won't ring for a while, so you can all go down to the quarry for a swim first.

The girls jump up and down and CHEER, then run off, with Tabitha jogging after.

EXT. THE QUARRY - DAY

The girls previously playing soccer run down a path through the woods and jump into a pool made by the flooding of an old quarry. They are still wearing their shifts. The swim and splash about and laugh and play in the water.

Minnow pauses by the side of the water and is just beginning to lift her shift off when she is caught from behind by Tabitha.

TABITHA

You leave that on.

MINNOW

Why?

TABITHA

Because you're supposed to, that's why.

MINNOW

I'm just going to have to dry it out after, and I don't like how it feels when it's wet.

TABITHA

Pastor Ellington says that girls must dress in modest apparel, shamefacedly and with sobriety. You don't want the pastor to be disappointed, do you?

Minnow doesn't answer but just jumps in the water and submerges. A few seconds later Minnow re-emerges and, when she thinks that Tabitha isn't looking, sticks her tongue out at Tabitha.

INT. THE COOKHOUSE - DAY

MELISSA, a young woman reaches into a wood-fired oven with a wooden peel and takes out a pie of some kind, which she sets aside to cool. MOTHER KATHERINE, a slightly older but still youngish woman, notices and comments.

(Note: none of the residents on the plantation have proper surnames. Women who have given birth to children are normally addressed with the honorific "Mother" or "Grandmother" or "Great-Grandmother" as the case may be plus their first name.)

MOTHER KATHERINE
Setting aside one of your meat-pies,
Melissa?

MELISSA
It's my turn to go up to the shack
tonight, Mother Katherine.

MOTHER KATHERINE
I'll bet Big Dan will like your pie.

MELISSA
I hope that's not all he likes!

MOTHER KATHERINE
(with a bit of nudge-
nudge, wink-wink)
Oh, I think it won't be.

EXT. THE QUARRY - DAY

The shadows have grown longer. The girls are still
frolicking in the water.

DINNER BELL

GRANDMOTHER ROSE, an old woman, RINGS a loud bell suspended
outside the Main Plantation Hall.

BACK TO SCENE

Tabitha calling out.

TABITHA
Dinner! Everyone out of the water!

Girls come up out of the water and start heading up the
trail. Tabitha glances around, a look of concern beginning
to appear on her face. She takes one girl by the arm.

TABITHA (cont'd)
Where's Minnow?

The girl shrugs and continues on her way.

Tabitha looks around and conveys a rising sense of alarm.

TABITHA (cont'd)
Minnow...Minnow?

Tabitha dives in, looking around, looking underwater where little can be seen because the water is murky. She surfaces, treading water.

TABITHA (cont'd)
(beginning to panic)
Minnow!

Tabitha dives in again, swims underwater a ways, surfaces again, her expression one of real panic.

Minnow surfaces next to her, spits a jet of water into the air, and then LAUGHS.

EXT. THE TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Tabitha is leading, almost dragging, Minnow up the trail.

MINNOW
Ow!

TABITHA
You're going to be in so much trouble! Where were you hiding anyway?

MINNOW
Underwater. I was holding my breath.

TABITHA
No one can hold their breath underwater for that long!

MINNOW
I can. I can stay underwater for longer than anyone.

INT. THE PLANTATION HALL - DAY

A long table is set for a communal meal. Almost all the seats are taken, but two are left empty next to Mother Katherine. Everyone at the table is a woman or girl. All ages are represented. Some are infants held in their mothers arms.

The implements around the wooden table are humble, but the table itself is richly set, with all sorts of delicious looking breads and stews and other dishes.

There is a BUZZ of background conversations among the many diners.

Tabitha and Minnow enter. Mother Katherine turns around

MOTHER KATHERINE
And where have you two been?

TABITHA
Minnow hid from me. Underwater at the quarry. She gave me a scare, mama.

MINNOW
You deserved it.

MOTHER KATHERINE
Enough of that. It is suppertime and everyone is hungry.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE AND GRANDMOTHER ALEXANDRA

GRANDMOTHER ROSE
(to Grandmother Alexandra)
Never could get that one out of the water. Swam like a fish, even when she was tiny.

GRANDMOTHER ALEXANDRA
(to Grandmother Rose)
That's why they call her Minnow.

BACK TO SCENE

At the head of the table ancient GREAT-GRANDMOTHER JUDITH, one of the oldest in the community, rises. The BUZZ of conversation ceases.

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER JUDITH
Let us pray.

Everyone folds their hands and bows their heads.

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER JUDITH (cont'd)
O Lord, we thank you for the gifts of your bounty which we enjoy at this table. As you have provided for us in the past, so may you sustain us throughout our lives. Amen.

ALL
Amen.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE
Thank you for grace, Great-
Grandmother Judith.

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER JUDITH
You are welcome, Grandmother Rose.

Everyone begins to eat, the younger girls with special gusto. The BUZZ of cheerful mealtime conversation resumes.

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - NIGHT

This is a small, neat room with whitewashed walls and a stone floor. There are wooden beams across the ceiling and a small, high window. A single oil lamp hanging from one of the beams provides illumination.

Mother Katherine sits in a rocking chair in one corner of the room, sewing a quilt with needle and thread. Minnow sits on the bed which dominates the room. She is paging through an old Bible, peering curiously at words she cannot read.

MOTHER KATHERINE
(looking up)
What are you doing, Minnow?

MINNOW
I'm looking at this thing that was left when Tabitha started sleeping in the older girls' room. It had fallen behind her cot. Do you know what it is?

MOTHER KATHERINE
It's a Bible.

MINNOW
Why is it here?

MOTHER KATHERINE
I think there used to be one in every room. I remember my grandmother telling me it was a rule of the plantation that there had to be one in every room, one time.

MINNOW
(frowning)
What are all these little marks?

MOTHER KATHERINE

I think that's what is called "writing." It's a way of taking what people say and making it into marks on paper so that later, people can know what they said. So for example, when Lord Jesus was preaching, people used the marks so that they could remember all his words later. That's what the Bible is. I think.

MINNOW

How do they know what the marks mean?

MOTHER KATHERINE

They can do something called "reading." It's how they turn the marks back into words.

MINNOW

(fascinated)

Can you read, mama?

MOTHER KATHERINE

Oh, no. I can't read. And my mother couldn't read. I think Great-Grandmother Judith can read a little. And certainly Pastor Ellington can read, And the helpers can all read.

MINNOW

It doesn't seem fair that they can and we can't.

MOTHER KATHERINE

Oh, I don't know why anyone would want to sit around looking at marks on paper when there's good food to eat and sunshine to be out in and babies to make...

Mother Katherine playfully pinches Minnow's cheek. Minnow LAUGHS.

MOTHER KATHERINE (cont'd)

The Good Lord has blessed us with a happy life here, Minnow. Now it's late, and it's time to sleep.

MINNOW

Okay, mama.

Mother Katherine puts away her sewing.

MOTHER KATHERINE
Don't forget your prayers, Minnow.

Minnow kneels by the beside and puts her hands together in prayer.

MINNOW
Now I lay me down to sleep,/I pray
the Lord my soul to keep./ May God
guard me through the night,/And wake
me with the morning light. Amen.

Mother Katherine turns out the oil lamp. She and Minnow climb into bed together.

MOTHER KATHERINE
Good night, Minnow.

MINNOW
Good night, mama.

INT. THE PLANTATION HALL - DAY

Minnow and a number of other girls her age are sitting around a table in the Plantation Hall. They have been given drawing tables and sets of crayons and are making drawings. They are all intently at work at this task.

Grandmother Rose seems to be supervising this process in a general way, but more clearly in charge is MRS. MERION, a Black woman wearing a professional women's suit.

Mrs. Merion walks around the table looking at the girls' drawings. Every so often she stops and makes a note on a clipboard she is carrying.

Mrs. Merion stops and looks at Minnow's drawing for a while.

MINNOW'S DRAWING

It's surprisingly good, given that Minnow has had little opportunity to draw in her life. A little version of herself swims in the blue water of a much bigger pond that she usually swims in. The pond is next to green trees of the forest.

BACK TO SCENE

MRS. MERION
Excuse me, your name is
(glancing briefly at
her clipboard)
...Minnow, is that right?

MINNOW
Yes, ma'am.

MRS. MERION
What are you drawing, Minnow?

MINNOW
The pond where I swim. I like to
swim. I guess that's why everyone
calls me "Minnow."

MRS. MINNOW
(smiles indulgently)
Is that so?

MINNOW
Only I wish I had a bigger pond to
swim in, so I imagine it, and then I
draw it. It's like I'm making it not
just in my imagination...

There are some giggles around the table.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE
(reprovingly)
Girls!

The giggles stop, but Mrs. Merion only smiles wider.

MRS. MERION
I understand, Minnow.

Mrs. Merion writes something more lengthy on her clipboard.

MINNOW
Mrs. Merion?

MRS. MERION
Yes?

MINNOW
May we keep these crayons and paper
you gave us, please?

MRS. MERION
(more indulgently
still)
Of course you can.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE
Everyone thank Mrs. Merion for being
so generous.

GIRLS IN UNISON
Thank you, Mrs. Merion.

EXT. THE SHACK - DAY

The Shack is a humble dwelling that fits its name. It is clapped together out of boards, old and weathered. A knothole in one of the boards provides an opportunity for a smallish person to peer inside.

Minnow and two girls about her age, BETTY and CAROLYN are congregated around that very knothole. At this moment, Betty is peering through.

The sounds of a woman having sex, GASPS and MOANS can be faintly heard through the boards. These continue through the scene.

CAROLYN
Let me see! Let me see!

Betty somewhat reluctantly yields her place at the knothole to Carolyn. Carolyn eagerly peers through.

CAROLYN (cont'd)
Eww!

MINNOW
My turn! My turn!

Grandmother Rose is approaching, surprisingly quickly for a woman her age who is using a cane.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE
You girls! Stop that right now!

The three girls turn away, looking shocked.

MINNOW
We were just...curious, Grandmother
Rose.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE

Well, you'll have plenty of time to gratify your curiosity about this sort of thing when you're older. Unless of course you are selected to be among the Brides of Jesus. Which seems quite unlikely, given your behavior!

There is a GRUNT of male consummation from within the shack, followed by a barely audible woman's SIGH. Grandmother Rose rolls her eyes.

MINNOW

We're sorry, Grandmother Rose.

GRANDMOTHER ROSE

You girls run along now.

INT. SANCTUARY - DAY

A church service is in progress. The women and girls of the plantation are standing in pews singing the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." No one has a hymnal. They are all singing from memory.

The congregation is being led by PASTOR ELLINGTON and accompanied on a harmonium. Pastor Ellington is a broad-shouldered, round-faced Black man in clerical vestments. He sings and speaks in a rich, penetrating baritone.

At the end of the hymn Pastor Ellington mounts the pulpit. The congregation remains standing.

PASTOR ELLINGTON

Beloved sisters, please be seated.

The congregation sits.

PASTOR ELLINGTON (cont'd)

Before this week's sermon I have a special announcement to make.

(picks a pair of
reading glasses up
and puts them on)

The Helpers Council and I have been meeting over the past week, and we are pleased to announce that we have selected this year's cohort of Brides of Jesus.

There is a flutter of excitement in the congregation.

PASTOR ELLINGTON (cont'd)
Would you please come to the head of
the congregation as I read your
names? Brenda...Laura...Denise...and
Tabitha.

More flurries of excitement as the four girls, all about
fourteen, walk to the front of the sanctuary, then turn
around to face the congregation.

PASTOR ELLINGTON (cont'd)
As we all know, it is a very special
calling to be asked to be one of the
Brides of Jesus, who are to leave
this plantation to go to the service
of Lord Jesus in a remote place. No
one can compel any of you to service,
and it must be of your free will. No
shame of any kind shall attach to any
of you should you decline. So I
shall ask you all in turn. Brenda,
are you willing to go from this place
and devote your life to the service
of Lord Jesus, though it involve
separation from all you have hitherto
known and hardships?

BRENDA
I am, Pastor Ellington.

PASTOR ELLINGTON
Then the blessing of doing so is
yours, my child. Laura, are you
willing to go from this place and
devote your life to the service of
Lord Jesus, though it involve
separation from all you have hitherto
known and hardships?

LAURA
Yes, Pastor Ellington.

PASTOR ELLINGTON
Then the blessing of doing so is
yours, my child. Denise, are you
willing to go from this place and
devote your life to the service of
Lord Jesus, though it involve
separation from all you have hitherto
known and hardships?

DENISE
Oh, yes, Pastor Ellington!

PASTOR ELLINGTON

(smiles a bit
patronizingly)

Then the blessing of doing so is yours, my child. Tabitha, are you willing to go from this place and devote your life to the service of Lord Jesus, though it involve separation from all you have hitherto known and hardships?

Tabitha glances back at her mother.

MOTHER KATHERINE

Smiles, but in a "smile through tears" sort of way, and nods.

BACK TO SCENE

TABITHA

I...yes, Pastor Ellington.

PASTOR ELLINGTON

Then the blessing of doing so is yours, my child. All four have consented. Hallelujah and praise the Lord!

EXT. THE SHACK - DAY

Two young women CONNIE and JOAN are having having a hair-pulling tussle outside the shack.

CONNIE

It's my turn for a visit!

JOAN

Second day after the new moon is my turn!

CONNIE

No one saw the new moon.

JOAN

It's not my fault it was clouded over.

OFFICER BOLIN strides up briskly. He is a tall, well-built Black man in a policeman's hot-weather uniform. His blue shirt is crisp and well-pressed, his badge shines. He carries no gun, just a short billy-club.

OFFICER BOLIN
What is going on here, ladies?

The women separate and face Officer Bolin, seething at each other, but clearly deferential to him. Both women curtsy before either begins to speak.

CONNIE
It's my turn for a visit, Officer Bolin!

JOAN
No, it's mine!

OFFICER BOLIN
(hands up in a
peacemaking gesture)
Now, ladies, let's...

BIG DAN (O.S.)
Bet I could take the both of them, no trouble.

BIG DAN

Big Dan has ambled out onto the porch. He looks like Li'l Abner brought to life. He is wearing only a patched and faded pair of blue jeans.

BACK TO SCENE

Officer Bolin is pointing at Big Dan with his short club.

OFFICER BOLIN
Big Dan, you stay out of this. You go on back inside now.

BIG DAN
Just tryin' to help you out.

Big Dan shuffles back into his shack. Officer Bolin reaches into one of his pockets and pulls out a Saint-Gaudens twenty-dollar gold piece.

OFFICER BOLIN
We can resolve this in a way that's fair.
(holding up the coin
for both women to
see)
This is my lucky coin, handed down from father to son for generations.

CONNIE
(repeating the word a
if it is unfamiliar)
"Coin."

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: THE GOLD PIECE

Officer Bolin shows the front of the coin.

OFFICER BOLIN
There's a lady on one side...

Officer Bolin shows the back of the coin.

OFFICER BOLIN (cont'd)
...and an eagle on the other.

BACK TO SCENE

OFFICER BOLIN (cont'd)
I am going to toss this coin. If the
lady side comes up, Connie visits
today, and Joan visits tomorrow. If
the eagle side comes up, then Joan
visits today, and Connie tomorrow.
Each of you gets to visit, and it's
just a question of who goes first.
Do you understand?

Connie nods.

JOAN
Yes, Officer Bolin.

OFFICER BOLIN
All right then. Here we go.

Officer Bolin balances the coin on his thumb, then flips it
in the air...

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER IN THE SWIMMING HOLE - DAY

The sun dapples through the water and illuminates clay on
the bottom of the pool. Something glints in the clay.

Minnow, swimming underwater, reaches out and brushes the
clay away from the glint, then pulls something out.

EXT. THE TRAIL TO AND FROM THE SWIMMING HOLE - DAY

Minnow runs up the trail, concealing something in her hand. After a short while, she steps off the trail and through some brush. She sits down on a rock next to a tree with a large knothole in it.

Minnow looks around to make sure no one is coming, then examines the object in her hand.

CLOSE-UP - MINNOW'S HAND

She is holding an old television vacuum tube, some parts of which still shine in the sunlight.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow examines the tube with fascination for a few seconds. There is a CRACK in the bushes -- someone might be coming. Minnow hastily hides the tube in the tree knothole and then heads back to the trail.

INT./EXT. THE HELPERS HOUSE - DAY

The Helpers House, viewed from this side, looks like a large version of other buildings on the plantation. Melissa walks up a stone path to a door in its side and lets herself in.

She steps into not only a room, but the twenty-first century. The room resembles a well-appointed medical office. Soft white LED light diffuses down on the room. A dark-skinned RECEPTIONIST sits at a desk.

The Receptionist looks up.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning, Melissa.

MELISSA

(curtsying)

Good morning, ma'am.

RECEPTIONIST

Well you're right on time. The doctor will see you in a moment. Please sit down and wait. Look at one of the picture books if you like.

There is a low table of picture books where one might find magazines in another doctor's office.

These books have no text but have pictures of things that make people happy to look at. Melissa picks one with puppies and looks through it.

INT. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A perfectly contemporary-looking doctor's examination room. DR. JONES is taking Melissa's pulse and blood pressures. Dr. Jones is a motherly-looking and -sounding Black woman in a white doctor's coat.

DR. JONES
(taking off her
stethoscope)
Well, it seems to me you're a very
healthy young woman, Melissa.

Dr. Jones scoots over on a wheeled chair and makes an entry on a little laptop computer.

MELISSA
Dr. Jones, I am worried that I have
no womanly flow this month.

DR. JONES
Well, it turns out there's a reason
for that, Melissa.
(pauses for suspense,
then breaks out in a
big smile)
You're going to have a baby.

Melissa gasps, open mouthed, obviously thrilled at this news. Then she puts her hands together as if in prayer and looks up.

MELISSA
Thank you, Lord Jesus!

DR. JONES
This means you will have to come back
and see me every month so that we can
make sure you have a healthy baby,
okay?

MELISSA
Dr. Jones?

DR. JONES
Yes, Melissa?

MELISSA

Do you think my baby might be a little boy?

DR. JONES

A lot of young women ask that, especially on their first baby. You have to understand that most babies born these days are little girls...

MELISSA

Oh, I mean of course I would love having a little girl...

DR. JONES

But sometimes there are little boys. It's just that we don't need many men to make babies, but we do need a lot of women. I guess the Good Lord understands that.

EXT. THE DEPOT - DAY

The Depot is on the other side of the Helpers House. It resembles a classic small-town train station, with a platform served by a single electrified track.

On benches on the platform sit the four girls selected as Brides of Jesus including Tabitha, along with their mothers and other girls, presumably their sisters. Minnow, as Tabitha's sister, sits with her and Mother Katherine.

SIGN AT TRACKSIDE

Where a path crosses the tracks, a warning sign has been placed to tell people what not to do around the trolley. It takes the form of an illustration of a particular activity, with a circle around and placed over that activity.

Two bad activities: playing on the tracks, indicated by stylized little girls jumping rope on the tracks, and trying to touch the overhead wire that feeds power to the trolley.

BACK TO SCENE

Mrs. Merion is also there dressed professionally as before.

The girls selected as Brides of Jesus are wearing something like proper summer sundresses and straw hats and shoes.

MOTHER KATHERINE
(expression stoic)
Are you excited to go on the train?

TABITHA
(expression also
stoic)
Yes, mama.

A few moments of silence.

MOTHER KATHERINE
They gave you a very pretty dress.

TABITHA
Thank you, mama.

MINNOW
Do they make you wear underwear under
it?

MOTHER KATHERINE
Minnow!

TABITHA
Yes, and it feels funny.

There is a WHISTLE in the distance from the approaching
train.

MINNOW
I hear the train!

The train, a modernized version of an old electric
interurban trolley, glides up to the platform. The
CONDUCTOR, a Black man in a natty uniform, steps out onto
the platform.

Mother Katherine's Stoic expression breaks and tears begin
to flow down her face.

MOTHER KATHERINE
(to Tabitha)
I will miss you so much!

Mother Katherine and Tabitha embrace.

TABITHA
Don't worry mama.
(leans her head
against her mother's
bosom)
I'm going to serve Jesus.

Tabitha embraces her little sister Minnow, who is also now crying.

MINNOW

Who is going to tell me to behave now?

TABITHA

I'm sure you'll behave just fine, Minnow.

Similar emotional leave-takings are happening elsewhere on the platform. Mrs. Merion places a hand on Tabitha's shoulder.

MRS. MERION

(gently by firmly)

We have to go now.

Tabitha releases Minnow from her embrace and allows herself to be led off. Minnow mouths "bye" as she goes.

The girls line up and board the train. The Conductor takes out a pocket watch, opens it, reads it, closes it, and puts it away.

CONDUCTOR

All aboard!

The Conductor reboards his train. The train pulls away from the platform.

The mothers and sisters left behind watch it as it disappears into the distance.

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - NIGHT

All lights are out but moonlight coming through the windows provides light. Mother Katherine lies sleeping. Minnow lies with her eyes open, staring at the ceiling.

Minnow suddenly rises. Mother Katherine stirs and MURMURS.

MINNOW

Just going to the privy, Mama.

Minnow leaves the room very quietly.

EXT. THE PLANTATION - NIGHT

Minnow walks down the trail to the abandoned quarry, her way lit by a brilliant full moon. When she reaches the edge of the swimming pond, she pauses, then reaches down to the hem of her shift, just beginning to lift it up.

A NEARBY TREE-BRANCH

The shift is thrown onto a low-hanging branch, where it lands. There is the sound of a SPLASH (O.S.).

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow's head, hair all wet, bobs above the surface of the moonlit swimming-hole waters, which ripple away from her where she dove in.

EXT. BY THE KNOTHOLE TREE - DAY

Minnow is examining the vacuum tube again. There is the SOUND OF SOMEONE APPROACHING. She hastily hides the tube in the knothole.

SIMON appears. He is a Black boy, about the same age as Minnow, dressed as if he were a white boy his age appearing in a 1950s sitcom. He is carrying a small book-bag.

SIMON

Hey.

MINNOW

(quite surprised to
see him)

Um...hello?

SIMON

I've seen you swimming.

MINNOW

I like swimming.

SIMON

Sometimes when no one else is around
you do with with all your clothes
off.

MINNOW

(shrugging)

So what? I like it better that way.

Simon hesitates for a moment.

SIMON

I'd like to see you with all your clothes off up close.

MINNOW

Why should I let you do that?

SIMON

I'll let you have something if you do.

Simon reaches into his book-bag and pulls out a book that he hands to Minnow. She opens it.

CLOSE-UP ON THE BOOK

It is a sort of children's alphabetical reading primer, with letters and bright illustration and a synthesized voice that "reads" the pages.

VOICE FROM THE BOOK

"A" is for "apple"...and "axe" and "ant." "B" if for "bear" and "bee" and "block"...

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow is paging through the book, obviously fascinated.

SIMON

So is it a deal?

MINNOW

Okay, sure.

Minnow carefully stashes the book in the hollow tree, then turns to face Simon. She reaches down to the hem of her shift and is just lifting it when there is WHISTLE BLAST from just out of the scene.

Officer Bolin comes into the scene. He looks angry, and faces Simon.

OFFICER BOLIN

Simon! What are you doing down here?

SIMON

(somewhat defiantly)

I wasn't doing anything! I was just visiting!

OFFICER BOLIN
Just visiting, eh? You know you're
not allowed down here, visiting or no
visiting.

SIMON
But I...

OFFICER BOLIN
And I am going to make you explain
what you are doing down here to your
mother.

At the mention of his mother Simon's posture and attitude
change from defiance to something like abjection.

SIMON
Yes, Officer Bolin.

OFFICER BOLIN
Now you stand over there while I talk
to this young lady.

Simon moves off, and Officer Bolin addresses himself to
Minnow.

OFFICER BOLIN (cont'd)
You are Minnow, yes?

MINNOW
Yes, Officer Bolin.

OFFICER BOLIN
There aren't a lot of boys for you to
be around here on New Hope
Plantation, so you might not
understand this, but when they get to
be about the age of that one over
there their brains are broken and
sometimes they run off and hope to
wrong things with girls.

MINNOW
Wrong things?

OFFICER BOLIN
Things that are improper. Things that
would make you feel uncomfortable.
Simon there didn't do anything that
made you feel uncomfortable, did he?

MINNOW
(a little puzzled)
No, Officer Bolin.

OFFICER BOLIN
Well, that's good. If any of the boys do leave Helper's House and come down and make you feel uncomfortable, you tell someone. You tell me, or you tell Pastor Ellington, and we'll make sure it's taken care of. Do you understand, Minnow?

MINNOW
I think so, Officer Bolin.

OFFICER BOLIN
Good. Now you run along home.

Minnow runs off. Officer Bolin turns to face Simon.

OFFICER BOLIN (cont'd)
As for you, boy, you come with me.

EXT. THE QUARRY - DAY

Girls about Minnow's age swimming in the swimming hole. While both are treading water, MARY turns to LOUISE and asks...

MARY
Where's Minnow?

LOUISE
I hope she's not hiding in the water again.

EXT. THE HOLLOW TREE - DAY

Minnow is sitting alone on the rock, looking at the primer

MINNOW
(reading to herself)
"C" is for "cat" and "can" and
"cheese." "D" is for "dog" and
"dart" and "doll"...

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - DAY

Minnow is puzzling over the Bible. Mother Katherine enters and Minnow hastily puts the Bible away.

Mother Katherine's hair is disarrayed, her cheeks flustered, and her shift sticks to her skin with sweat. She seems happy, though. She falls down on the bed.

MINNOW

Mama? Are you alright?

MOTHER KATHERINE

I'm fine, Minnow. I'm perfectly fine.

MINNOW

Where did you go?

MOTHER KATHERINE

I was...I was at the Shack.

MINNOW

You never used to go to the Shack.

MOTHER KATHERINE

Yes, but the Helpers have rotated Big Dan out and Big John in and Big John is...

(searches for the
right word for a
second)
...gentler.

MINNOW

(brow furrowed)

Gentler?

MOTHER KATHERINE

You'll understand when you're just a little bit older.

EXT. THE HOLLOW TREE - DAY

Minnow looks a little bit bigger and older. Than in the previous scene. She is reading from the primer, a little bit hesitantly, especially at multi-syllable words.

MINNOW

(reading to herself)

In Fairy Town, in Fairy Town,/ Where
Fairy folk go up and down,/ Where
Fairy children, wee and gay,/ Frisk
and romp in Fairy play,/ Every day's
a holiday!

INT. THE SANCTUARY - DAY

The community at worship. Pastor Ellington is sermonizing from the pulpit.

PASTOR ELLINGTON

I'd like to offer a special prayer
today for a member of our
congregation.

WORSHIPERS SITTING IN PEWS

We see many of them their expressions pious and concentrated. Minnow is sitting without her mother.

PASTOR ELLINGTON (O.S.)

For our beloved sister Katherine,
whom God is as long last about to
favor with another child, and who is
even now in labor under the loving
care of Dr. Jones and her nurses at
the Helpers' House.

BACK TO SCENE

PASTOR ELLINGTON

O Lord, who covered us all in our
mothers wombs, we beseech you, care
for your daughter Katherine and her
child not yet born, deliver them from
the sorrows of labor that they may
again see the light of day and live
with us in health and happiness.
Amen

THE CONGREGATION

Amen.

EXT. THE HOLLOW TREE - DAY

Minnow is still a little bit bigger and larger. She is reading again, here more fluently and confidently.

MINNOW

(reading to herself)

God of our weary years,/God of our
silent tears,/Thou who hast brought
us thus far on the way;/Thou who hast
by Thy might/ Led us into the light,/

Keep us forever in the path, we
pray./ Lest our feet stray from the
places, our God, where we met Thee,/

Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine
of the world, we forget Thee;/

Shadowed beneath Thy hand,/May we
forever stand./True to our God,/ True
to our native land.

Minnow closes the primer slowly, then deliberately puts it
back into the hollow tree.

INT. THE SANCTUARY - DAY

Another worship service. Minnow sits with Mother Katherine,
who holds LAURA, an infant, in her arms. Laura fusses
slightly during the service. Mother Katherine soothes her.

PASTOR ELLINGTON

Our sermon this week will be on this
verse from the book of Ecclesiastes,
chapter 9, verse 11: "I returned, and
saw under the sun, that the race is
not to the swift, nor the battle to
the strong, neither yet bread to the
wise, nor yet riches to men of
understanding, nor yet favor to men
of skill; but time and chance
happeneth to them all."

INT. STAIRS DOWN FROM THE SANCTUARY - DAY

Minnow, Mother Katherine, and baby Laura in Katherine's arms
are walking down the stairs in a crowd of other worshipers.

MINNOW

(to herself)

"....neither yet bread to the wise,
not yet riches to men of
understanding..."

MOTHER KATHERINE

What are you saying, Minnow?

MINNOW

I'm just trying to memorize the verse
that Pastor Ellington used for
today's sermon, mama.

MOTHER KATHERINE

(smiling)

That's a good girl.

MINNOW

Mama, do you mind if I go to our
quarters for just a minute?

MOTHER KATHERINE

No, but don't be late for Sunday
supper.

MINNOW

I won't, mama.

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - DAY

Minnow takes out the Bible and opens it, shuffling through
pages until she finds Ecclesiastes.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: ECCLESIASTES 9

Minnow's finger traces Ecclesiastes 9:11.

EXT. RAIL LINE - DAY

Minnow is walking along the train track away from the
Plantation. The track runs on raised embankment that in
turn parallels a fast-running river.

In the distance, the single electrified track swings left to
cross the river over a drawbridge, currently raised. A
little guardhouse sits on the near side of the river.

INSIDE THE GUARDHOUSE

A RIVER GUARD, his feet up on a desk, reads a newspaper, the
ATLANTA DEFENDER, which has at least one visible headline
ANOTHER VESSEL REPORTED MISSING. A German shepherd dog lies
on the floor, dozing.

BACK TO SCENE

Far away, from behind Minnow, can be heard the sound of
train WHISTLE.

Minnow hastily scrambles down the far side of the embankment and presses herself against it so as not to be seen.

The train CLATTERS by overhead. Once it has passed, Minnow cautiously pokes her head up to see what happens.

The train comes to a stop before the bridge. It sounds two long BLASTS of its whistle.

INSIDE THE GUARDHOUSE

The River Guard puts his newspaper down. The German shepherd sits up, expectantly. The River Guard picks up a leash and leashes the the dog.

RIVER GUARD

Okay, Cujo, let's go have a look.

OUTSIDE THE TRAIN

The Conductor has stepped out of one of the cars. He looks at his watch. He and the River Guard wave in greeting to each other as the River Guard comes out with his dog on the leash.

CONDUCTOR

Morning, Hal.

RIVER GUARD

Morning, Sam.

The River Guard walks his dog around the little train. The dog actively sniffs around the train's undercarriage but doesn't spot anything.

The River Guard and dog make a complete circuit of the train.

RIVER GUARD (cont'd)

You're all clear, Sam.

CONDUCTOR

Thanks, Sam.

The Conductor climbs back aboard his train. The River Guard returns to his guardhouse with the dog. After a few seconds the drawbridge goes down. The train sounds two SHORT BLASTS and then proceeds across the bridge.

INT. YOUNG WOMEN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

A larger room with bunk beds, lit by oil lamp. Teenage versions of Mary and Louise and other girls are in bunks. Minnow is at the bottom of one.

MARY

(to Louise)

So you did it? You really did it?
You went to the shack?

LOUISE

Yes.

MARY

And what was it like?

LOUISE

It was...mmm...it was fun.

MARY

And now maybe you'll have a baby soon!

LOUISE

(dreamily)

Maybe...

MARY

I'm going as soon as it's my turn!
What about you, Minnow?

MINNOW

Oh, I don't know. I guess I don't feel ready yet.

LOUISE

Ready? What do you mean ready?
You've got...

(cups her hands under
her breasts)

...and you've got...

(cups her hand around
her vulva)

...so I'd say you're ready.

GIGGLES from the various girls.

MARY

Don't you want to have a baby?

MINNOW

I don't know.

LOUISE
But God wants us to have babies.

MINNOW
What if I don't want what God wants?

There are a few moments of shocked silence.

MARY
I hope Pastor Ellington never hears
you saying anything like that.

EXT. ROCK OUTCROPPING - DAY

The outcropping is a secluded high point, such that no one lower down can see what's on or near its peak. There is a ledge large enough to accommodate Minnow lying down.

Minnow climbs up to the ledge.

ROCK

Minnow's hands laying out her shift on the rock surface.

MINNOW'S LEGS

Bare, tanning in the sun

MINNOW'S HEAD AND SHOULDERS

Bare, her eyes closed. Minnow has turned over. Still tanning in the sun.

(Note: from this point on the the screenplay Minnow should stay deeply tanned, to the point where she can "pass" in a world of people who are mostly Black with a few people who are of Asian or Latino with heavy Native-American antecedents.)

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - DAY

A now deeply-tanned Minnow is giving baby Laura a bath in a little wooden tub. From time to time Laura GURGLES and COOS with pleasure as she's washed.

MINNOW
I'm so glad mama had you, Laura.
(sponges Laura a bit)
She'll be less sad because she'll
have you.

(MORE)

MINNOW (cont'd)
(rinses Laura a bit)
Just promise not to be too well
behaved, okay?

Minnow dries and dresses Laura and then lays her down in a cradle, which she rocks for a few seconds. Laura, a good baby, swiftly goes to sleep.

Minnow reaches under the family bed and pulls out the drawing tablet and a few crayons remaining from the ones she got from Mrs. Merion some years before. Minnow begins to draw.

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - A LITTLE LATER

Minnow had laid out four drawings on the bed. They are shown in turn.

MINNOW'S DRAWINGS

1. A sketch of Minnow (her because she's colored her skin brown) walking down the trolley line, evidently somewhere away from town. In the upper right-hand corner, a short line.
2. Minnow dancing with what look like fairies. In the upper right-hand corner, two short lines.
3. A picture of what looks like Mother Katherine with teardrops falling from her eyes. Around this Minnow has drawn a large circle with a slash through it. In the upper right-hand corner, three short lines.
4. Minnow and her daughter embracing. In the upper right-hand corner, four short lines.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow folds the drawings and puts them into the Bible (at Ecclesiastes 3) and lays the bible on the head of the family bed.

Minnow then takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly.

EXT. RAIL LINE - NIGHT

It is another brilliant moonlit night. Minnow is jogging along the rail line until the drawbridge looms into sight. It is brightly lit by orange sodium-vapor lamps.

Minnow scrambles down the embankment on the river side, pauses at the river bank, takes a deep breath, and then dives in.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Minnow swims and swims underwater downstream, not surfacing. After some time we see the orange light of the drawbridge's lights pass above. Minnow keeps swimming for some time, then makes her way to the far bank.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Minnow emerges from the water and scrambles up on the bank, coughing and spluttering. She takes several deep breaths before settling.

Minnow partly conceals herself in some riverside reeds. She takes off her wet shift, wrings it out and then puts it back on. Then she scrambles back up the opposite-side embankment back to the rail line.

Minnow looks over her shoulder back to the orange glow of the drawbridge, takes one more deep breath, and then sets off down the train track.

EXT. RAIL LINE APPROACHING TOWN - DAY

Daylight is just beginning to appear in the sky. Minnow is walking down the rail line and looking a bit tired. The track is coming into a town, and a siding branches off which Minnow follows.

Minnow cautiously crosses a street, which is empty, then follows the track down a back alley of a commercial block, which it evidently serves as a freight delivery-spur.

In the back alley, Minnow comes across a set of dumpsters, apparently behind a grocery store. She looks in one and finds groceries that have been thrown out as "expired" but are still good. Minnow helps herself to some food.

The next building is several stories tall and has a loading dock in back. Minnow examines the dock cursorily and then finds a narrow alley between the tall building and another which she cautiously works her way up.

The alley opens up onto a main street. The tall building has a large neon sign in its front O.T. JOHNSON DEPARTMENT STORE.

There is a glass front with manikins modeling various goods. On the front door a sign: CLOSED FOR HOLIDAY.

A lone car drives up the main street. Minnow hastily retreats down the side alley to the back.

Minnow then explores the loading dock and notices that a door has been left slightly ajar with a wooden block holding it open. Minnow gingerly enters.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE EMPLOYEES ROOM - DAY

This is a utilitarian space with lunch tables, lockers, restroom facilities and even a showering space (separate, off to the side). Someone has left the lights on.

MONTAGE - FIRST STEPS IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE

- Minnow sitting at a breakroom table, hungrily eating the groceries she has salvaged.
- Minnow in the shower room, gingerly experimenting with the taps in the sink. Hot, cold, hot, cold, uncomfortably hot (ouch!) then cold again. Minnow takes water and drinks.
- Minnow experiments the same with one of the showers, getting various results.
- Minnow takes a shower. Some soap has been provided. She looks as happy as Marion Crane taking her shower in Psycho before stabby Norman Bates showed up.

Minnow comes through a swinging door that reads STAFF ONLY. She's in the department store, first floor. It's a floor full of women's clothing. Minnow wanders the isles, amazed. The light is dim but there is enough to see by.

In a little time Minnow catches sight of a pretty dress on a rack. She sheds her shift and tries it on, then poses in a mirror and smiles at herself. She ties her shift around her waist and continues exploring.

Walking through the aisles she finds a straw hat that she likes and adds to her ensemble.

A little while later she heads up a stopped escalator to a higher floor.

INT. TOYS AND OUTDOOR STUFF FLOOR - DAY

She wanders for a while through a toy section, gazing in wonder mostly at all the toys she would never have had.

She comes across a section with bicycles in it. There is picture of a happy family (all Black, of course) happily riding their bicycles down a suburban street on a summer day.

MONTAGE - MINNOW TEACHES HERSELF TO RIDE A BIKE

She falls off a number of times but eventually gets the hang of it, riding around the aisles of this floor of the department store, gleeful.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow puts the bicycle back where she got it.

She goes up an another stopped escalator to another floor.

INT. ELECTRONICS FLOOR - DAY

There are all sorts of radios and televisions here, all turned off. Minnow finds one and after fumbling for a while manages to turn it on. There is a television program on.

TELEVISION PROGRAM

PRESIDENT BEECHAM, a very dignified and elegantly-dressed Black woman surrounded by high ranking African-American and other person-of-color armed-forces officers and other dignitaries.

She takes a wreath and places it at the base of a cenotaph-like monument. A band in the background plays funereal music.

TELEVISION ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and the President now places the wreath at the memorial to the many dead of the Invasion Riots.

(pause)

There will now be a minute of silence for reflection and recollection.

President Beecham and all around her bow their heads.

There is a DISTANT NOISE. Minnow swiftly turns the television off and skedaddles.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow turns the television off, and goes off to explore another floor.

INT. FURNITURE FLOOR - DAY

This floor has furniture, including beds. There are pictures also showing smiling people sleeping in beds.

Minnow rubs her eyes, curls up on one of the display beds, and promptly falls asleep with her new hat on an adjacent pillow.

INT. - FURNITURE FLOOR - NIGHT

It's a little darker as Minnow has slept through the rest of the day. There is a PING of an elevator arriving on the floor. Minnow's eyes pop open at the ping.

A beam of light from a SECURITY GUARD's flashlight sweeps across the floor. Minnow, trying not to panic, rolls off the bed onto the floor. At the last minute she remembers to snatch her hat. Minnow then crawls under the bed.

The Security Guard walks the aisles, sweeping too and fro with his flashlight. When he sees the bed that Minnow was sleeping on he pauses, then approaches the bed.

The Security Guard's flashlight shines on the impression left on the bed by Minnow. Minnow is under the bed trying to be as silent as she can.

SECURITY GUARD

Hmm.

The Security Guard then smooths out the impression with a swipe of his hand and then walks away.

Minnow continues to hide for a while. Eventually the elevator pings again as the Security Guard heads to another floor.

Minnow crawls out from under the bed.

She runs silently down a stopped escalator to the floor with the bicycles and grabs the one she had before. On another part of the floor she also picks up a backpack.

She walks the bicycle as quietly as she can down a number of other flights of stairs, down to the first floor, through the breakroom, and out the outer door.

EXT. THE ALLEYS AND STREETS OF THE TOWN - NIGHT

Minnow heads out as quietly as she can. She walks her bicycle down the alley to the dumpster, where she scavenges some more groceries to put in her bag.

She then bicycles out onto the streets, which are mostly quiet and empty. The town through which she is riding appears to be a sort of idea small American town, circa 1960 or so.

Bicycling around one corner, Minnow comes across a handsome red-brick school building which bears its name ANGELO HERNDON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL on a sign on its front lawn. Its gymnasium is brightly lit up.

Minnow bicycles to a back alley behind the school. She stashes her bicycle and climbs another dumpster to look peek inside a one of the high gymnasium window.

VIEW INSIDE THE JUNIOR HIGH GYM

It's a junior high school dance, early on. A line of adolescent boys in jackets and ties stand about fidgeting awkwardly on one side of the gym, while young ladies in pretty dresses occupy a line on the other side of the floor.

REVERSE SHOT - MINNOW PEERING THROUGH WINDOW

Viewed through the window, Minnow's brow furrows with curiosity.

BACK TO DANCE

One GRACEFUL YOUNG LADY, apparently determined to break the ice, glides away from the others toward the middle of the floor, One YOUNG MAN just beings to break away from his own line toward her.

BACK TO SCENE

There is s BANG of a door closing in the distance, followed by a HUBBUB of approaching adolescent male voices.

Minnow jumps down from her position, hastily retrieves her bicycle, and cycles off.

After some more riding, Minnow catches sight of a sign over an iron-scrollwork archway reading A. PHILIP RANDOLPH PARK.

Minnow enters the park. The only light is that of the gibbous moon. After bicycling a little while she spots a little copse of trees with a small depression beyond, apparently out of sight of any of the park's paths.

Minnow heads there with her bicycle. She leaves the bicycle on its side and beds down under the trees, putting her hat to one side and folding her shift to use as a pillow. She falls asleep.

EXT. THE COPSE - DAY

Early morning sunlight peeks through the trees. Minnow wakes up, folds her shift. She removes some salvaged groceries from her backpack and then puts her folded-up shift away.

Minnow eat a simple breakfast, then leaves the copse, leading her bicycle.

EXT. PARK AND STREETS - DAY

Minnow bicycles out of the park and onto the streets of the town.

In daylight, the town resembles an idealized almost idealized version of 1950s American suburbia, with neat single family houses often behind white picket fences. It is Leave-it-to-Beaverland or Pleasantville.

Minnow bicycles past a PAPERBOY who is riding the other way, throwing newspapers out of his bag onto porches. The PAPERBOY smiles and waves. Minnow somewhat hesitantly smiles and waves back.

Minnow passes a MIDDLE-AGED MAN who is mowing his lawn. He smiles and waves at Minnow as she goes by. She somewhat less hesitantly smiles and waves back.

Minnow passes a well-dressed YOUNG MOTHER who is pushing a baby carriage along the sidewalk. This time Minnow initiates the wave with a ring of the bell on her bicycle. The Young Mother waves back.

Down the street, Minnow sees a COP watching her. His uniform is similar to Officer Boland's, but he has a revolver on his belt. Minnow turns away and bicycles off.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DAY

Minnow bicycles down a highway. Traffic is light and any that passes her ignores her. She comes to a sign that reads OCEANSIDE, showing a the way to a side-road.

Minnow takes the fork and goes down the side-road. There is no traffic, just silent woods around.

Minnow comes to a chain across the road. There is a sign hanging on the chain: BEACHFRONT AREA RESTRICTED TO RESIDENTS HOLDING PERMITS.

Minnow shrugs, pulls the chain aside and bicycles past.

The road rises up to a ridge. Minnow pushes the bicycle hard until she reaches the crest.

When Minnow looks down, she sees a sandy beach. To her right is a large cottage. (It's a large cottage -- one might almost call it a small beachfront villa.) To the left the road turns away and follows the ridgeline.

Minnow registers astonishment and joy appropriate to someone who has never seen this mass of water before.

Minnow ditches her bicycle and backpack by the side of the road and runs down to the beach. Halfway down she drops her hat, strips off her summer dress and sandals, and then runs down to plunge into the water, naked.

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

Minnow floats in the sea, her expression one of bliss.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - DAY

By the sun it is clearly later in the day. Minnow is back in her dress on the porch of the beachfront cottage. She tries the door and finds it unlocked.

INT. COTTAGE INTERIOR - DAY

Minnow spends some time exploring the cottage's kitchen. She discovers a cabinet with cans. One has a label on it showing a bowl of steaming soup and a label OLD JOE'S COUNTRY HAM AND BEAN SOUP.

Minnow goes through various kitchen drawers pulling out various implements in an attempt to open the can.

After a while she finally discovers a can opener and figures out its use.

Once Minnow has opened the can takes a spoon she has found and eats its contents directly.

INT. SMALL COTTAGE BEDROOM - DAY

The light of dusk is coming through the window. Minnow enters a child's bedroom and finds a bed. She lies down on it and falls fast asleep.

EXT. SHORE ROAD AND BEACH - DAY

Morning daylight again. Minnow is bicycling down the deserted road paralleling the shoreline. At one point she stops and pulls two empty cans out of her backpack to toss them away in the woods by the roadside.

After a while she finds the road's path blocked by a tall (about 12') black concrete and steel wall topped with sharp points.

On the fence where the road crosses it there is a sign that reads RESTRICTED AREA -- ACCESS FORBIDDEN. The fence extends across the beach and a good way into the ocean.

Minnow peers at the fence for a while, then walks her bicycle onto the beach down to the shoreline. She leans her bicycle against the wall, puts her backpack down, and strips off her dress.

Minnow walks naked into the water, swimming out to see and in the end around the wall.

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL - CONTINUOUS

Having rounded the wall, Minnow swims a a ruined stone pier that extends out to the ocean. The pier has steps leading down to the water. Minnow attains the steps and gingerly climbs up them.

Minnow walks down the pier toward the ruins of a town.

EXT. THE RUINED TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Minnow picks her way down a weed- and rubble-choked street in the ruins of what looks like it was an American seashore town in the 1950s. Buildings on either side are broken and burned out.

The street has a few rusted shells of 1950s-style cars set at eccentric angles to the street.

Minnow notices something among the weeds and bends over to pick it up. It is a rusted U.S. Army helmet of Korean War vintage. Minnow stares at it uncomprehendingly for a few moments and then puts it down.

After a while Minnow comes upon the burned-out shell of U.S. Army M103 tank, its faded star insignia just visible through rust and weathering. Minnow climbs atop the turret and looks around.

INT. ABANDONED MOVIE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Minnow walks through the lobby (where a faded poster for South Pacific is visible) and then down the aisle of an abandoned movie palace. Part of its roof is missing and sunlight comes in. All is badly damaged.

Minnow climbs up on the stage and looks back at the seats.

EXT. ABANDONED COLLEGE CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

Minnow walks down a decayed brick sidewalk looking around a 1950s-era American liberal arts college, ruined just like the town it is in.

She approaches a building with LIBRARY on its lintel. She picks her way inside.

INT. THE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Minnow in the library. It is a mess, but she is there long enough to note that there appears to still be intact books on the shelves.

INT. LIBRARY READING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Various dust-covered books sit on tables. Holes in the ceiling allow sunlight to enter.

Minnow picks up a book from a table. It is a large volume with a title THE AGE OF ATOMIC WARFARE, with an illustration of a mushroom cloud. Minnow opens the book.

INTERIOR OF THE BOOK

Two pages of photographs show hideously burned and wounded victims of the bombing of Hiroshima, with captions.

MINNOW'S FACE

Minnow registers shock and horror.

INTERIOR OF THE BOOK

A diagram, shown close up, labeled HYPOTHETICAL THERMONUCLEAR DEVICE with a sketch of the same and labeled parts.

MINNOW'S FACE

Her brow is furrowed, concentrating, her eyes moving rapidly as she takes in the diagram.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP ON THE DIAGRAM

A caption pointing to a part of the weapon, labeled LITHIUM 6 DEUTERIDE.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - MINNOW'S EYES

Holding still, focused on the diagram.

EXT. THE PIER - LATER

Minnow dives off the stone pier by way of which she first came into the ruined town. She swims out toward the end of the wall.

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - NIGHT

There is just a little light in the room from the moon. Minnow lies on her back wearing her dress. Her eyes are open, staring at the ceiling.

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

Minnow is swimming in the ocean, naked, blissful, clearly enjoying herself in the water, when she hears a despairing cry.

ZOE (O.S.)
Help...help...!

ZOE IN THE WATER

ZOE MOORE, a young Black woman wearing a modest one-piece bathing suit, is struggling in the water. She has a cramp, cannot swim properly, and seems about to go under.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow turns, swims swiftly toward Zoe. With an intuitive understanding of saving a drowning swimmer, she puts an arm around Zoe, then tows her, swimming on her back toward shore.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

Minnow, holding Zoe's arm over her shoulder, walks Zoe through the surf and onto the beach. (The two women are about the same size. Minnow lays Zoe on her back in the sand and kneels beside her. In the distance, another voice.

DR. MOORE
Zoe...Zoe!

CHARLES MOORE

DR. CHARLES MOORE, a handsome, well-kept, middle-aged Black man, and Zoe's father runs down the beach, approaching.

BACK TO SCENE

Dr. Moore kneels beside his daughter and holds her head up. Zoe coughs and splutters a bit, but is okay.

DR. MOORE (cont'd)
What happened, Zoe?

Zoe points to Minnow, kneeling opposite Dr. Moore.

ZOE
Cramp...she pulled me out...

Dr. Moore looks at Minnow, and does a quick double-take when he realizes she is naked. Minnow looks more than a little cowed and frightened.

DR. MOORE
(making placatory
gesture with his
hands)

It's okay...I'm a doctor and this is
my daughter...uh...maybe just let me
get something so that you can cover
up.

INT. MOORE COTTAGE KITCHEN - DAY

Minnow, Zoe, and Dr. Moore sit around the table. Zoe and
Dr. Moore are dressed casually, and Minnow has been dressed
in a pair of jeans and an oversize t-shirt.

Minnow is hungrily eating stew from a plate, and takes
occasional drinks from a glass of milk. A newspaper sits on
the table. Dr. Moore and Zoe watch her with concern.

DR. MOORE
(gently)
So, Minnow, can you tell us tell us
where you came from?

MINNOW
I grew up in a place called New Hope
Plantation.

Dr. Moore and Zoe exchange somewhat worried looks.

MINNOW (cont'd)
Please don't make me go back yet. I
know I wasn't supposed to leave, but
I wanted to see the outside world so
much.

ZOE
Daddy, can't we...

Dr. Moore hold up a hand.

DR. MOORE
Minnow, you can stay here with us for
a while, until we can figure some
things out.

MINNOW
Oh, thank you!

DR. MOORE
Given how tanned you are, it would
seem that you can pass.

MINNOW

Pass? Pass what?

ZOE

Pass as one of us. Plantation people are all white, but you have grown dark enough that you look like one of us.

DR. MOORE

So you can safe here for a while, anyway. My name is Charles Moore. I'm a doctor, as I guess I said earlier.

(gesturing at Zoe)

This is my daughter Zoe. She's a reporter.

MINNOW

I know what a doctor is. We had a Dr. Jones on the plantation. But what is a reporter?

ZOE

It means I write for a newspaper.

MINNOW

(frowning her brow
and tilting her head)

Newspaper?

Dr. Moore holds up the newspaper for Minnow to see. Prominent on its front page is the headline JAPANESE EMPEROR TO VISIT.

DR. MOORE

This is a newspaper.

MINNOW

Oh.

(craning neck forward
slightly)

Why is the Japanese emperor coming to visit?

Dr. Moore looks at the front of the paper, then back at Minnow, astonished.

DR. MOORE

Wait, you can also read?

MONTAGE -- ZOE GETS BOOKS FOR MINNOW

--Zoe, in a nice summer dress, rides an electric motor scooter down the road leading to the beach.

--Zoe walking up the stairs of an elegant municipal library.

--Zoe checking out a stack of books, mostly children's books on science and nature, at a the library circulation desk.

--Zoe scootering back down the road, this time with a pack full of books.

--Minnow, wearing one of Zoe's dresses, is sitting on a couch in the cottage reading one of the books, pointing at something excitedly for the benefit of Zoe, who looks over her shoulder and smiles.

--Zoe buying food at a farmer's market.

INT. MOORE COTTAGE KITCHEN - NIGHT

A small table groans under a lot of delicious food, barely leaving room for three set places. At two of the places sit Zoe and Dr. Moore One place is not yet occupied.

DR. MOORE

Minnow, you must come and eat.

MINNOW (O.S.)

Just one more dish, Dr. Moore.

Minnow enters and puts one more dish on the table, then takes a seat. Dr. Moore dishes to dish out food, only to be interrupted by Minnow.

MINNOW

Um, Dr. Moore?

Dr. Moore looks puzzled for a moment, then enlightenment dawns.

DR. MOORE

I'm sorry I...oh, I mean yes, of course.

Zoe, Minnow, and Dr. Moore take hands around the table and bow their heads. There is a moment of awkward silence.

DR. MOORE (cont'd)

Minnow, perhaps you'd best do it.

MINNOW

(fluidly)

"O Lord, we thank you for the gifts of your bounty which we enjoy at this table. As you have provided for us in the past, so may you sustain us throughout our lives. Amen."

The three rapidly dish out food and begin to eat, hungrily.

DR. MOORE

Where did you learn to make such delicious food, Minnow?

MINNOW

We all cooked together on the plantation. The older women taught us younger ones.

Dr. Moore pauses his eating a bit uneasily, putting down his fork.

MINNOW (cont'd)

Is something wrong, Dr. Moore?

DR. MOORE

(picking up his fork)

Oh, no. Nothing's wrong.

ZOE

Daddy thinks the plantation system is wrong.

MINNOW

(brow furrowed)

Why are plantations wrong? Most people I knew there were happy. We didn't have to work too hard, there was good food to eat, there were doctors and a pastor and even a police officer to help us out. Women got have babies, and what few men there were around -- those that weren't from the outside, that is -- got to make babies, which I guess they liked.

DR. MOORE

Did you notice that all the people who had to stay on the plantation were white, and those who came from the outside to work were black?

MINNOW

Yes. I did. I had been meaning to ask why that was.

Dr. Moore pauses again and this time looks even more uncomfortable than before.

ZOE

I suppose we could show Minnow one of the school documentaries.

DR. MOORE

Yes, I suppose we could at that. After dinner. I'll wash up and you two can put on the documentary in the living.

MINNOW

Oh, I can wash up, Dr. Moore.

DR. MOORE

Now, Minnow, you've done more than your fair share already with making us all this wonderful food. I'll wash up.

Minnow looks a little puzzled again.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE COTTAGE - LATER

Minnow sits on a couch while Zoe takes a videodisc off a shelf. The videodisc is alternate-world tech, the size of a long-playing record.

MINNOW

So we're going to watch one of those moving pictures?

ZOE

Yes.

Zoe puts the disc into a player and turns on a television attached to it, then settles down next to Minnow to watch.

THE TELEVISION

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

America at mid-century was a peaceful and prosperous place.

(MORE)

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Having emerged as the one undamaged
victor from the terrible Second World
War, its citizens were looking
forward to leading lives of comfort
and happiness.

MONTAGE: HAPPY WHITE PEOPLE LIVES

- Well-dressed women shopping in a 1950s supermarket.
- A family having a barbeque.
- Dad arriving home in his new car at his suburban ranch house, being greeted by his kids and the dog after a day at work.
- Dad being handed a cocktail by his well-dressed wife as he enters the house.

BACK TO TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
But in the spring of 1958, all around
the world and without warning
invaders came from the sea.

Grainy, black-and-white footage of bipedal fish-frog men (Deep Ones) swarming ashore on a beach somewhere in vast numbers.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Invading inland, the marine invaders
spread terror and destruction!

More black-and-white footage of main street of a typical American small town, except that it's badly fucked up: shopfronts smashed, buildings in flames, crashed and burning cars in the middle of the street.

Deep Ones stalk down the street.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
In some cases, the dead would envy
the living.

Closer-up view of a TEENAGE CUTIE. Her sweater has been smeared with blood and torn so that it reveals a bra-strap. She's running toward us, screaming silently. Then she ducks to the side, presumably into an alley.

Behind her are three Deep Ones, slopping along in pursuit of the Teenage Cutie. They duck down the alley after her.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
The armed forces of the world's
nations mobilized in an attempt to
beat back the threat.

Footage of U.S. Army s marching with shouldered rifles,
turning, standing at attention.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
General Douglas MacArthur was called
out of retirement to fight the war.

MACARTHUR stands on a high podium, addressing the troops.

MACARTHUR
And I can promise the American people
this, that we shall promptly repel
this invasion and wipe out this
obscene species.

Footage of American soldiers shooting rifles at some enemy,
firing flamethrowers, and a M103 tank firing its main
armament.

MINNOW AND ZOE ON THE COUCH

MINNOW
(excitedly)
I've seen one of those! So that's
what it does!

Zoe looks at Minnow with a disbelieving expression on her
face.

BACK TO DOCUMENTARY

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
General MacArthur launched a massive
offensive toward what he believed to
be the Marine People's base on the
coast of North America. Meeting
little opposition, he assumed himself
to be on the path to a quick victory.

Animation showing an arrow thrusting across a map of
Southeastern Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
But the ability of the Marine Peoples
to hide in swamps and small bodies of
water meant that they were able to
infiltrate and cut off General
MacArthur's forces.

Footage of Deep Ones emerging from swamp muck.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
Several divisions of U.S. Army and
Marine Corps forces were simply
annihilated.

Several shots of bodies of soldiers and marines lying dead
on the ground or floating in muddy water.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
General MacArthur himself did not
escape the general massacre. It is
said that then-President Eisenhower's
final and fatal heart-attack was
precipitated by this shocking image.

MacArthur's severed head on top of a tall pole. He is still
wearing his officer's cap, his aviator sunglasses, and his
trademark corncob pipe is somehow clenched between his
teeth.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
In the wake of this huge military
disaster many white Americans sought
someone to blame.

GEORGE WALLACE on an outdoor stage, speaking into a
microphone the great appreciation of his all-white audience.

GEORGE WALLACE
And my friends I have it on the
highest authority that the murder of
our American boys by these Satanic
hell-fiends was facilitated by
treasonous Negroes and Communists who
showed them the way and sabotaged our
forces. The time has come for
action!

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE from Wallace's audience.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Action was not long in coming, as
white mobs took the law into their
own hands.

MONTAGE: STILL PHOTOGRAPHS OF A POGROM

-- Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in
flames.

-- A posed lynching photograph. The burned body of a black man has been strung while a bunch of white people stand around smiling, made anomalous by a Googie-style restaurant and 1950s-style cars.

-- A truck being driven, apparently at speed, into a crowd of well-dressed black people holding a protest.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Soon enough, on orders of now-President Nixon, a more systematic approach was taken to the problem of black "treason."

Grainy footage of a group of naked black people, men, women, and children all, being lined up beside a trench and shot by soldiers. They fall into the trench, whereupon another line is made to stand at the side of the trench.

It could footage shot in Belorussia in 1942, except that the victims are black, and the soldiers are all in American uniform.

MINNOW AND ZOE ON THE COUCH

Minnow is trembling and crying and Zoe is trying to comfort her.

BACK TO DOCUMENTARY

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Meanwhile the search for scapegoats went on.

Interview with a WHITE CRACKER, the interviewer off camera.

WHITE CRACKER
 The ni...
 (rest of word bleeped out)
 are just being used in this war against decent people by communiss' cosmopolitan innaleckshuls.

OFF-CAMERA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 By "communist cosmopolitan intellectuals," you mean...

WHITE CRACKER
 You know who I mean.

The Central Synagogue on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan engulfed in flames.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The "pogrom," as it was called, soon spread to the destruction of institutions of learning throughout the country.

-- The New York Public Library burning down. In the course of the shot, some sort of shell or explosive hits one of the stone lions in front of its main entrance, shattering it.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

Determined to prevent a genocide and save what they could of civilization, a group of young people of color formed a provisional government of people of color.

Group of young people, mostly black but some Latino, Native American, and Asian, meeting around a large improvised conference table.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

This group formed militias.

An angry mob of white people charging down an urban street, waving U.S. and Confederate flags, carrying clubs, shotgun, rifles. There is a sudden RATTLE of machine-gun fire from off-camera.

The front rank of the white rioters fall, while the rest turn and flee.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

The militias became an army, its ranks swelled by colored veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War.

Soldiers of color standing in neat ranks, wearing old uniforms, shouldering rifles.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

And the Army fought.

Soldiers of color advancing carefully through a field, their rifles at the ready.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

President Nixon, in desperation, turned to the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the United States, which rained poison and death on the Marine Peoples.

Shot of a nuclear weapon going off, with a giant mushroom cloud rising into the sky.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

And while mass death and the poisoning for decades of some parts of the seacoast happened, in the end it was too much for the remaining forces of the old human world to have armies at the front and back. A treaty was signed in which the new provisional government gave up atomic weapons and the Marine Peoples agreed to call off their invasion.

The President of the new United States, A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, sits at a conference table with various aides, etc., signing a document.

DOCUMENTARY ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)

While the remaining white people were, to protect the peace and for their own protection, interned on plantations managed by the new government.

A long column of miserable-looking white people, carrying bundles of their few remaining belongings, walk down a road, escorted by non-white soldiers.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - LATER

It is dark. The television has been turned off. Minnow sits on the couch, staring into space. Zoe continues to sit by her side.

ZOE

Minnow, are you okay?

MINNOW

I have a lot to think about.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

Minnow and Zoe are walking along the beach. It is a cloudy day, threatening rain. Minnow seems unusually pensive.

MINNOW

Why do they put us on farms?

ZOE

The war between humans and the Fishmen ended with a treaty. The Fishmen apparently had two demands. One was that human beings give up atomic weapons. The Fishmen felt threatened by those, I guess.

MINNOW

I don't see what that has to do with the Plantations.

ZOE

There was a second demand. Some time in the past the Fishmen used to come on shore and...mate with human beings. I don't know why they wanted to do this but they did. They would make babies with human women who would turn into fish people as they got older. At some point the humans took up arms and drove the fish people off the land. After the war, the fishmen demanded that they be given a certain number of human women per year that they could do with what they wanted.

MINNOW

That they be given...

ZOE

The Plantations are where those women come from.

MINNOW

Where they...
(rising in pitch)
...the Brides of Jesus...
(to almost a shriek)
...oh my God my sister!

Minnow runs off down the beach.

ZOE

(calling after her)
Minnow! Minnow!

INT. THE COTTAGE DINING AREA - DAY

Zoe, Minnow, and Dr. Moore around the kitchen table. There is coffee. We hear the sound of RAIN DRUMMING ON THE ROOF and occasional DISTANT THUNDER Minnow, looks upset.

DR. MOORE

Yes. It's true.

(stirs coffee)

People here know about the existence of the plantations but not about how they are run. Mostly they just taught that they are a kind of public charity toward a backward people unfit for self-government. Sort of like how white people early in the twentieth century thought about the "reservations" onto which Native American peoples were forced. But in fact they have a purpose: the security, the healthcare, the religion, even the sex ratio...

MINNOW

Sex ratio?

DR. MOORE

Genetic and medical interventions to make sure that at least fifty girls are born on the plantations for every boy.

MINNOW

But why?

DR. MOORE

The fishemnn want women, the plantations need to produce them. This also: men are by nature difficult and sometimes violent. But a man who is outnumbered fifty to one by women is easy to persuade to do things other than plot a revolution.

ZOE

Minnow, I know these are things that are hard to accept. They are the outcome of choices made by people generations ago who felt like they had no reasonable choice. You saw the documentary...

MINNOW

Yes...

Minnow stares into space. There are a few moments of very awkward silence. These are interrupted by a KNOCKING on the front door of the cottage. Everyone looks stunned for a second or two, and then the KNOCKING resumes.

CANTOR

(from outside)

Colonel Moore? It's Public Security.

Panicked looks from Zoe and Dr. Moore, confusion from Minnow.

DR. MOORE

(urgently whispered)

Take her! I'll answer the door.

Zoe stands up, takes Minnow by the hand, almost pulling her away from the table.

MINNOW

What they...?

ZOE

These people will want to take you back to the plantation...if you're lucky.

Minnow allows herself to be led away.

THE KITCHEN

Zoe bustles Minnow through a small, low door into a back pantry.

ZOE (cont'd)

Try to be small and be quiet back in there.

THE FRONT DOOR

Dr. Moore opens the front door, where he is confronted by SPECIAL AGENT CANTOR. Cantor is a biracial black man wearing a trench coat and holding out a badge of some sort.

CANTOR

Colonel, I'm Special Agent Cantor.
May I come in?

DR. MOORE

Is it urgent?

CANTOR
I'm afraid so.

Dr. Moore shrugs, lets Cantor in.

CANTOR (cont'd)
(turning head to one
side)
You three wait outside.

FRONT PORCH OF THE COTTAGE.

Three SOLDIERS, two black men and one Native American-looking, wearing rain ponchos and carrying wicked-looking assault rifles, stand and look around warily.

THE DINING AREA

Zoe re-enters. Her eyes flicker to the front hall where Cantor has stepped in, then down to the table, where there are three settings for coffee. She freezes. Though her father is in the way, much of the dining area is visible from the front hall.

THE FRONT HALL

Cantor has just stepped in. He's quite wet from the rain.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
May I take your coat, Special Agent
Cantor? You're dripping...

CANTOR
Thank you, Colonel. I wouldn't wish
to make a mess of your lovely
vacation home.

Cantor turns around to allow Dr. Moore to remove his coat, which Dr. Moore does.

THE DINING AREA

As soon as Cantor turns around, Zoe moves lightning quick to grab one of the coffee settings. She darts away with it.

THE KITCHEN

Zoe stashes the coffee setting under the sink.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Moore and Cantor enter, followed shortly by Zoe. Cantor is holding a document portfolio.

DR. MOORE
(introducing)
Special Agent Cantor, may I introduce
my daughter Zoe?

CANTOR
Of course. How do you do, Miss
Moore.

ZOE
How do you do, Special Agent Cantor.

DR. MOORE
Won't you sit down?

They all sit.

DR. MOORE (cont'd)
So, to what do we owe the pleasure of
a visit from Public Security on this
rainy afternoon?

CANTOR
There are two things, as it happens.
First, we believe that there's a
flyer in the area?

DR. MOORE
(apparently surprised)
A flyer? Here? That hardly seems
likely.

Cantor reaches into his document portfolio and hands a
single sheet to Dr. Moore.

CLOSE-UP VIEW OF FLYER

It is a view of some grainy taken-from-life photographs of
Minnow with the words FLYER and REWARD prominent, as well as
smaller, hard-to-read type.

BACK TO SCENE

CANTOR
She answers to the name of "Minnow."
She managed to slip away from the
Wilson Plantation a few weeks ago.
(MORE)

CANTOR (cont'd)
She's obviously unusually resourceful -- we haven't had many who have stayed out this long -- and some witnesses think they might have seen someone who looks like her in the area. There are concerns that she might be very committed to her flight and there is possibility of violence if she is confronted.

DR. MOORE
Oh, now really, I don't think...

CANTOR
(holding up a hand)
I'm just relaying what the psych docs think, Colonel.

INTERIOR OF PANTRY

Minnow is listening with her ear pressed up against the door of the pantry. At Cantor's words "her mother is terribly worried about her" a tear forms in one eye and trickles down her cheek.

CANTOR (O.S.)
(muffled, through door)
They also say that she might give up if told that her mother is terribly worried about her.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
(muffled, through door)
I am told that often works with flyers.

BACK TO SCENE

CANTOR
We can, of course, arrange for a guard here if you like.

Dr. Moore gets up, goes to a bookshelf in the room, pulls down a mysteriously heavy volume and opens it. It's a booksafe. He takes out a .45 caliber automatic, weighing it in his hand.

DR. MOORE
I believe that I can adequately defend myself and mine if I need to.

CANTOR
I would not doubt that, of course,
Colonel. We know your record.

Dr. Moore puts the book with the gun back and returns to his seat in the living room.

DR. MOORE
Besides I would like to enjoy the
peace and quiet of my long-overdue
vacation.

CANTOR
(settling back, a
little uncomfortably)
Ah, well, I'm afraid I have some bad
news with respect to that.

Cantor reaches into his portfolio and hands a folder to Dr. Moore, who flips through it. Anger begins to appear on his face as he does.

DR. MOORE
I was told I wouldn't have to another
one of those. I told them I wouldn't
do another one of those.

CANTOR
Yes, well, about that. Dr.
Derbyshire had an accident recently
and is unavailable for the procedure.
Meanwhile, as you are perhaps aware,
the Hostiles have been getting more
hostile of late. It's hard to gauge
exactly, since we don't speak their
language. But they speak ours and
their demands for deliveries have
been getting...shriller? Control
sees this as a national security
matter.

Dr. Moore looks daggers at Special Agent Cantor.

CANTOR (cont'd)
I don't wish to be blunt, Colonel,
but with your privileges go
responsibilities.

Dr. Moore looks down, now somewhat depressed.

CANTOR (cont'd)
Take a day or so and think it over.
But not more.

Special Agent Cantor shifts, changing the subject. He leans forward, looking at a pile of books on the coffee table. They are library books, checked out by Zoe for Minnow. He sorts through a few.

CANTOR (cont'd)
Do you have a...young relative
staying with you, Colonel?

ZOE
(sitting up)
Oh, those are mine.

CANTOR
Yours?

ZOE
Yes. I checked them out from the
library in town.

CANTOR
A little young for you perhaps, Miss
Moore?

ZOE
I'm a journalist.

CANTOR
Yes, we knew that.

ZOE
I'm on an assignment to write a
review article of science and history
books for young people. You know,
are they doing a good enough job
teaching the subjects, that sort of
thing?

CANTOR
I see. Well, good luck with that.

EXT. THE COTTAGE - DAY

Cantor steps out, wearing his coat. He lights a cigarette and takes a long drag. Then he looks at one of the soldiers who are still on the porch and nods. The soldier nods back.

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dr. Moore, Zoe, and Minnow sit around the kitchen table. They're not having anything.

A center light shines down on them. The rain has stopped, but through windows occasional flashes of distant lightening can be seen.

DR. MOORE

I might have turned you in, either today or any time before today.

MINNOW

But you didn't.

DR. MOORE

I know. Of all people I should have been the one who did.

ZOE

Perhaps you need to tell her more.

MINNOW

Like, why did that man call you "Colonel?"

Dr. Moore takes a deep breath, then lets it out slowly before beginning to speak.

DR. MOORE

I'm not just an ordinary doctor. I graduated at the absolute top of my class in medical school and was made what they call a "Public Security Surgeon." I work on medical cases of significance to the state. I've been working on them for many years with success, which is why I also have a military rank.

DR. MOORE DOING SENSITIVE SURGERY

Dr. Moore is in a full surgical gown, surrounded by medical staff in the same, doing what looks like a complex operation.

DR. MOORE (V.O.)

I worked on various difficult cases. I was proud of what I was doing. It felt very patriotic. It was also well compensated. I mean, how else do you think a government employee can get this nice stretch of private beachfront?

DR. MOORE BEING GOWNED

Two nurses in red surgical gowns that echo those in David Cronenberg's Dead Ringers help Dr. Moore put on a similar gown.

DR. MOORE (V.O.) (cont'd)
But over time I began to see things
that struck me as very ugly, many of
them connected with the plantation
system.

DR. MOORE ALONE IN THE OPERATING THEATER

He is wearing the red surgical gown. A single, female figure lies on an operating table, entirely covered by a white sheet. Dr. Moore approaches, holding a single scalpel.

DR. MOORE (V.O.) (cont'd)
At a moment where my loyalty was
tested, I couldn't bring myself to
send anyone back there. I guess at
this point I've got a little treason
in me.

BACK TO SCENE

DR. MOORE
And about another things, Agent
Cantor isn't wrong. Things are
beginning to get worse between people
and fishmen.

ZOE
Perhaps you should tell Minnow what
you found, Daddy.

DR. MOORE
I was called in last year to do an
autopsy on a young worker at a
government research facility. He had
rammed a vehicle through a gate
leaving the place and was shot dead
by security.

DR. MOORE IN A STERILE WHITE AUTOPSY ROOM

Dr. Moore is performing an autopsy on the body of a young man who is laid out on a stainless steel table. The man looks not-quite-normal. He is stocky, his mouth is too wide, and his eyes show a pronounced hypertelorism.

DR. MOORE (V.O.)

Not only did I find evidence of gills and other structures suggesting that he might be one of the fish people -- a spy but I also found something very strange inside his stomach.

DR. MOORE HOLDING UP A TEST TUBE

It is small and sealed. A sliver of metal floats inside a bath of oil. We see it in extreme close-up at the end of a pair of tongs Dr. Moore is holding up.

DR. MOORE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Test showed it to be lithium metal. But no ordinary lithium metal. It weighted only about 80 percent as much as naturally occurring lithium. It was lithium-six. That doesn't occur in pure form in nature. It can only occur at all if someone went to a great deal of trouble to separate it out from natural lithium. Why would anyone go to the trouble?

BACK TO SCENE

MINNOW

Maybe they want to build a thermo... something. Thermo...thermo...nuclear device?

There is absolute stunned silence for a moment around the table, then a rumble of distant thunder.

DR. MOORE

How on earth could you possibly...

MINNOW

A library?

ZOE

Minnow, most libraries from the era of atomic weapons were destroyed, remember? And the government censors all information about atomic weapons now.

DR. MOORE

To convince our fishy friends that we are obeying the treaty obligations.

MINNOW

There's a library near here that was not destroyed.

ZOE

You can't possibly mean...

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sound of a ZIP as Dr. Moore seals a black waterproof bag, which he hands to Zoe. Minnow is also there. Both Zoe and Minnow are wearing one-piece swimsuits.

DR. MOORE

That should do it. It will float and keep anything you find dry.

MINNOW

(tugging a bit at the straps of her swimsuit)

Do I really have to wear this thing? It makes me feel a little uncomfortable.

DR. MOORE

(a bit awkwardly)

Trust me, it makes me feel a lot comfortable. Wear your life vests. Minnow, hold on to Zoe.

MINNOW

I got her out of the water once, didn't I, Dr. Moore?

ZOE

That you did.

DR. MOORE

And let's hope that they haven't improved surveillance over there. I know no one has ever landed on a boat, but I guess they aren't expecting swimmers.

ZOE

We'll be careful. But I have to look I into this.

DR. MOORE

When you get back -- if you get back, I won't be here.

ZOE

Daddy, why?

DR. MOORE

This operation. I don't want to do it, but if I don't there will be more suspicion.

MINNOW

What operations?

DR. MOORE

It's...complicated. Perhaps we can explain later.

Zoe embraces and kisses her father.

ZOE

Stay safe.

DR. MOORE

You stay safe.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND THE COTTAGE - DAY

Special Agent Cantor and his subordinate HEARN lie in a carefully concealed blind in the woods. They are wearing ghillie suits and watching through binoculars. A steady, slow rain falls throughout the scene.

THROUGH BINOCULARS AT COTTAGE

Zoe and Minnow emerge from the cottage, wearing their swimsuits and flotation vests, Zoe carrying the waterproof satchel on a strap. They head down the beach.

CANTOR (O.S.)

Hell of a day to go out for a swim, eh, Hearn?

BACK TO SCENE

HEARN

Indeed it is, sir.

A few seconds of viewing.

CANTOR

Where the hell are they going? They can't possibly...

HEARN

Action on the other side of the house, sir.

THROUGH BINOCULARS AT COTTAGE

Dr. Moore emerges, well dressed for rain in a trenchcoat and carrying a briefcase. He goes to a parked electric vehicle outside the cottage, puts the briefcase in and then gets in himself before driving.

CANTOR (O.S.)

Well I'll be damned.

BACK TO SCENE

Cantor puts down his binoculars, backs up a bit and finds a radio, a sort of big, clunky walkie-talkie. He puts it to the side of his head.

CANTOR

(into radio)

This is Cantor to Control. Come in Control...acknowledge. Yes we've found our flyer. She's exactly where we thought she might be. She and the Colonel's daughter are together. They're wearing swimwear on the beach...Yes, Control, I am aware that it is not appropriate weather for beach activities. The Colonel? Appears to have left to keep his appointment. We can snatch the flyer right now with likely minimal resistance. Uh huh...uh huh...yes sir. Will do.

Cantor puts the radio away.

CANTOR (cont'd)

We're to maintain position and continue observation until further orders.

HEARN

You are shitting me.

CANTOR

Control has its reasons, Hearn. They always do.

TWO NEARBY SOLDIERS IN THE WOODS

SOLDIER #1 and SOLDIER #2 are maintaining their positions of deep concealment in the woods while huddling under rain ponchos. Both have expressions consistent with being wet, weary, and uncomfortable.

Soldier #1 looks disbelievingly at Soldier #2. Soldier #2 just shakes his head very slowly.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE RESTRICTION WALL - DAY

Minnow points out to sea, directing Zoe's attention to the end of the wall.

MINNOW

Just out there and around.

ZOE

(doubtful, a little
afraid)

I don't know...

MINNOW

Just hold on to your handle on the
bag. You'll be fine.

Minnow takes the bag from Zoe.

Minnow splashes into the sea. She LAUGHS a bit with pleasure at entering the water. She drops the bag into the water, where it floats. Minnow then turns around and gestures back at Zoe.

MINNOW (cont'd)

C'mon! The water's actually nice
and warm.

Zoe looks skeptical, then begins to wade slowly out into the surf.

EXT. IN THE WATER - CONTINUOUS

Minnow and Zoe are swimming in the ocean.

ZOE

I don't know if I can really keep
going, Minnow.

MINNOW

Just hold on and I can tow you for a while. I'm sure I can.

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL -- CONTINUOUS

Minnow climbs out and up the ruined stone pier, carrying the bag which she sets down on the top of the pier before turning to offer a hand to Zoe and helping her up.

ZOE

I don't know how badly I ever want to do that again.

Zoe unseals the top of the bag, taking out two pairs of slip-on shoes which she and Zoe then put on.

EXT. THE TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Minnow walking through the ruins of the town, past the burnt-out Army tank. Zoe looks awed but they otherwise walk in silence for a few minutes.

They approach and then cross the ruined college campus. When they arrive at the library, Minnow indicates the way simply by pointing.

They pause on the steps of the library. Minnow puts the bag down, and Zoe unseals it, taking out two flashlights, handing one to Minnow and keeping one for herself.

INT. THE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Minnow walk through the library, guided by Minnow to the reading room. It's somewhat dark in here due to the darkness of the day outside. Dust swirls in beams of the flashlights, and Zoe coughs at least once.

MINNOW

I remember the book in here...

Minnow goes over to the table where she left THE AGE OF ATOMIC WARFARE. It is still there. She picks it up excitedly.

MINNOW (cont'd)

...yes here it is. Look at this!

She picks the book up and hands it to Zoe, who holds it in one hand while lighting up the page with her flashlight.

DIAGRAM OF THE THE HYDROGEN BOMB

Illuminated by spot of light.

ZOE (O.C.)

Holy smoke!

BACK TO SCENE

ZOE

A colleague of mine was working on story about a government research facility in California, supposedly set up as an experiment in removing salt from seawater, but actually, as he found out, they were separating out heavy water.

MINNOW

What's "heavy" water?

ZOE

It's water where the molecules are made with deuterium rather than hydrogen, and thus something very useful if you want to make lithium six deuteride, and we already know someone else is making lithium six.

MINNOW

And that means?

ZOE

(expression darkening)

Someone in the government is trying to make a hydrogen bomb.

Zoe closes the book.

ZOE (cont'd)

(expression
brightening)

Minnow I'm about to write the biggest news story of the century! Yes! Yes!

MINNOW

That's great...Zoe, before we go, can I ask you for something?

ZOE

Right now, you could ask me for anything.

MINNOW
It's about the fishmen...

INT. CARD CATALOG ROOM - DAY

Zoe and Minnow confront the card catalog.

ZOE
Here is how they used to keep track
of all the books. They put
information like titles and subjects
on little cards and then kept them in
alphabetical order. So you said
"fishmen?"

MINNOW
Yes.

Zoe goes to an drawer "Fisher-Fistula," pulls it out and
flips through the cards, illuminating them with her
flashlight.

ZOE
(half to herself)
Fisher, Sir Ronald...fishgarth...
fishing-rod...fishmen: there's a
cross-reference card, says "see Deep
Ones."

Zoe finds another drawer, pulls it open

ZOE (cont'd)
Decree of Canopus...deed poll...Deep
Ones.

Zoe carefully removes the card from the drawer, shines a
light on it for Minnow to see, and reads.

ZOE (cont'd)
"The Innsmouth Dwellers: An attempt
at a description of their customs and
language." It says restricted
access, rare books collection, third
floor. Catalog number QL89.W50 1935.

INT. THROUGH THE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Minnow walk up the stairs to the third floor, then
through the stacks.

The third floor is a treacherous, waterlogged mess. Parts of roof ceiling are missing exposing the stacks to bare sky. Most of the stacks themselves are broken and rotten and the books beyond salvage.

Minnow leads, as if by some preternatural sense of where she wants to go. Zoe follows her.

Suddenly the rotted floor gives way under Zoe. She falls through the floor with a SHRIEK, grabbing at the edge of broken floor. She has dropped her flashlight.

With fast reflexes Minnow whirls around and grabs both of Zoe's wrists, pulling her to safety.

ZOE
(panting, badly
frightened)
Jesus!

MINNOW
C'mon.

The arrive at stout door in one wall at the end of the stacks. The door has been forced open, damage to the wall and pry-marks are still visible, though very weathered.

ZOE
(pointing to the
damage)
It's been forced!

Minnow proceeds beyond the door. There is much less decay and damage in this room than elsewhere on the library floor. Windows to the outside let in light. There are bars on the windows, and the glass in them is still intact.

Not far in front of them on the floor besides a reading table lies a skeleton, still wearing tattered rags of the clothing it once wore. Open on the table is a large folio volume.

Zoe and Minnow approach gingerly. Zoe very carefully turns the pages on the folio to the front, where there is a ghastly woodcut illustration. She reads aloud.

ZOE (cont'd)
"Necronomicon. A Alhasredo scriptus
et a Olao Wormio redditus in linguam
latinam." The hell?

MINNOW
Dangerous knowledge, perhaps?

Minnow kneels down and plucks something from the skeleton's neck.

EXTREME CLOSEUP

It's small chakram made of some sort of mysterious alien metal, still shiny. There is "writing" on the top and bottom surfaces. Minnow cuts herself a little on her finger. Still sharp!

MINNOW (cont'd)

Ow!

BACK TO SCENE

ZOE

Let's find that book. And then let's get out of here -- this place is really giving me the creeps. Can I have your flashlight?

Minnow gives her the flashlight. Walks with it through the shelves, after a few seconds casting it on the book itself.

ZOE (cont'd)

Here.

She takes the book down, walks over and hands it to Minnow.

Minnow carefully leafs through it for a few seconds.

MINNOW

Amazing...someone took down all these words...but doesn't understand them...

There is a sudden BANG from some indistinct quarter. Zoe nearly jumps out of her skin.

ZOE

Can we be amazed in my nice warm kitchen, please?

Minnow seals up her book in the waterproof satchel. She is about to head out, satchel slung over her, when she looks back at the skeleton.

MINNOW

Poor man. You'd think we could at least...bury him or something.

ZOE

Maybe that can be our next trip.

The two women head out.

INT. THE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The two women move as quickly and quietly as they can through the third floor, staying close to the walls. It's evident that even Minnow is feeling a little spooked at this moment.

They go down the central stairs and out of the building,

EXT. THE CAMPUS AND THE TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Minnow move quickly back through town toward the waterfront.

SHOT: FISHEYE VISION

"Fisheye vision" is a point of view shot, in black and white, through a fisheye lens. The camera moves a bit shakily, as if it were carried by a slowly loping figure.

Zoe and Minnow make their way down the street. Then Minnow turns, startled as if hearing something behind her.

The Fisheye swiftly shifts behind the brick wall of a decaying building.

BACK TO SCENE

ZOE

Did you see something?

MINNOW

No. Let's keep moving.

EXT. THE RUINED STONE PIER - DAY

Zoe and Minnow are making their way along it, looking for a spot to descend back into the water.

SHOT: FISHEYE VISION

The P.O.V. is looking up at Zoe and Minnow making their way, then it descends below the surface of the water.

BACK TO SCENE

Minnow and Zoe find their way down to the water near the end of the pier and jump in, taking the waterproof satchel with them.

EXT. IN THE WATER - DAY

Zoe and Minnow swimming in the water, going as fast as they can.

EXTREME CLOSE UP

Minnow's hand as it churns through the water. A thin trail of dark blood leaks from her finger where she cut it on the chakram before

SHOT: FISHEYE VISION

P.O.V. of something swimming several meters below Minnow and Zoe, looking up at them.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE RESTRICTION WALL - DAY

Zoe and Minnow emerge, splashing through the surf.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE COTTAGE - DAY

Zoe and Minnow reach and enter the cottage

EXT. THE BLIND IN THE WOODS - DAY

Special Agent Cantor, looking through binoculars.

CANTOR

What the hell is going on here?

INT. THE COTTAGE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zoe and Minnow sit at the kitchen table, working. Each has a big mug of coffee. Both are wearing terry-cloth robes.

Zoe has set up a small electric typewriter and is typing away furiously, piling up pages of her news story. A small stack of what look like Polaroid photos sits at her right hand.

Minnow has THE INNSMOUTH DWELLERS and is taking copious notes which cover much of the table. At some point she looks up.

MINNOW

Zoe?

Zoe continues typing.

MINNOW (cont'd)
(somewhat louder)

Zoe?

Zoe stops, looks up.

ZOE

Yes?

MINNOW
Aren't you going to get some rest?

ZOE
Story is too important. What about you?

MINNOW
Book is too interesting. I think I might be on to something about how the Fishman's language worked. You see they play this funny trick with word order, and until you catch it...

ZOE
Tell me all about it when I'm done. I really need to finish...

MINNOW
Yeah, okay.

Zoe resumes typing.

INT. STUDY IN THE COTTAGE - NIGHT

Zoe is standing next to an ungainly-looking fax machine in her father's study and talking on a phone.

ZOE
(into phone)
So you have the story...yes, I have pictures of the diagram in the book, plus publication information. I'm feeding them in now.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: ZOE'S HAND

She is feeding a polaroid photo of the page showing the hydrogen-bomb diagram into the machine.

BACK TO SCENE

ZOE (cont'd)
(into phone)
You got that? Good. You know where
to reach me...bye.

Zoe hangs up the phone, and leaves the room

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - DAY

Zoe walks into the bedroom. Minnow is already there. The curtains are drawn but just a little gray light of the breaking day is filtering through. The covers on the bed are pulled back.

MINNOW
So is it done? Did you send it on
the machine?

ZOE
(sleepily)
Um hm.

Zoe collapses onto the bed.

MINNOW
So do you want to hear what I worked
out about the Fishmen's language?
It's really neat. Zoe?

Minnow touches Zoe's shoulder but Zoe is already fast asleep.

Minnow covers Zoe, then slips into bed under the covers beside her, curls up next to her and goes to sleep herself.

EXT. RANDOLPH CITY DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

It is very early morning in the business district of a major city. A news truck pulls up at the curb.

The NEWS DRIVER gets out and pulls two bundles of newspapers from the back of the truck and drops them by a newsstand, then gets back in his truck and drives off.

THE NEWS BUNDLES

The headline of the RANDOLPH CITY TIMES (a New York Times lookalike) reads across the top SOURCES SAY GOVERNMENT WORKING ON NEW BOMB with subhead POSSIBLE TREATY BREACH.

EXT, THE COTTAGE ON THE BEACH - DAY

It is morning. The several days' rain have stopped and the sun has risen over the ocean. The peaceful sound of WAVES is overlain by the CRIES of gulls.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - DAY

(Note: The sun shines through the window, casting a patch of sun on the opposite wall. In the scenes that follow, this patch will move down and across the floor indicating the progress of the sun in the sky.)

Minnow and Zoe are watching a television news broadcast. President Beecham is walking across the White House lawn having just arrived by helicopter. INDISTINCT SHOUTED QUESTIONS are heard off-camera.

ON TELEVISION

President Beecham turns to face the microphones of an assembled press corps.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

One question only.

There is CONFUSED NOISE OF SHOUTED QUESTIONS until the President indicates that one journalist should speak.

T.V. REPORTER (O.C.)

Madam President, is it true that the government has renewed an atomic weapons program?

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

We have no comment on that report at this time.

President Beecham turns and walks away, to the sound of more INDISTINCT SHOUTED QUESTIONS.

BACK TO SCENE

Zoe turns the television off.

MINNOW

(worriedly)

Aren't you and your father going to be in a lot of trouble over this?

ZOE

Do you remember how my father said that he had a little treason in him?

MINNOW

Yes.

ZOE

Well, I think at this point it's more than a little treason, and it's in me too.

MINNOW

Over the plantations? I mean, I understand why that's wrong and all but...even so, it isn't like most people are unhappy there. Why risk...whatever it is they do with traitors over that? Is it about the Brides of Jesus. Is what happens to the Brides of Jesus that bad?

Zoe stares into space for a moment, her face registering a torment that goes with weighing different very bad choices.

ZOE

Wait here for a moment.

Zoe leaves the room and then returns a few seconds later holding a videodisc. Its cover is plain beige. She slips the disc out of its cover and puts it in the player, speaking while setting it up to play.

ZOE (cont'd)

My father thinks I don't know about this briefing disc, but in fact I do. Only people very high-up in the government are allowed to see this. I hate this, Minnow, I really do, but you are going to have to learn what's really at stake here.

The T.V. comes to life.

ON SCREEN

The words SUBJECT DELIVERY AND PREPARATION appear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AN ACADEMIC OFFICE - DAY

The LECTURER, a distinguished, middle-aged Black woman in a well-cut women's suit, looks into the camera and speaks.

LECTURER

Prior to the Great Conflict, the Marine Peoples mated on land with available humans, most significantly at bases in Micronesia and at the compromised town of Innsmouth in the old United States. After the Treaty of Providence, the human species and the Marine Peoples agreed that each would be kept to their separate spheres of sea and land as a means of preserving peace. The Marine Peoples insisted, however, that a certain number of human females be made available to them for breeding purposes. As the normal environment of deep oceanic depths is far too hostile for any human to inhabit, however, a special surgical conversion procedure was developed to keep breeding specimens alive and functional.

INT. A LARGE OPERATING THEATER - DAY

A surgical team, several members all in red robes and masks, stand around an operating table.

Through a side door two women, GUIDE #1 and GUIDE #2, both Black women dressed in red nun habits, lead the SUBJECT, a girl in her late teens, who wears only a white cotton shift. The subject looks a bit scared and apprehensive.

LECTURER (V.O.)

Through a lifelong process of socialization, the subject has been led to believe a narrative that she has been selected to make a special sort of journey of great spiritual importance.

The Guides lead the Subject to the table, the surgical team parting to make way for her.

SUBJECT

Sister, I'm scared. Who are these people?

GUIDE #1

These are the Transporting Angels, who we have told you about, my love.

GUIDE #2

There is nothing to fear. You must be prepared for your journey.

GUIDE #1

You can begin by removing your shift.

SUBJECT

(hesitating)

Uh...

GUIDE #2

There is no need for shame. You are pure, like Eve in Eden before she sinned.

The Subject removes her shift and is now naked.

GUIDE #1

That's a good girl. Now climb up on the table, lie down, and just relax.

The Subject complies.

Guide #1 looks at the HEAD SURGEON.

GUIDE #1 (cont'd)

She is in your hands now.

The Head Surgeon nods. The Guides turn and leave. The Head Surgeon then turns to the ANESTHESIOLOGIST and makes a gesture with his head. The Anesthesiologist approaches the Subject with a mask in hand.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

(very gently to the Subject)

Sweetheart, I'm going to put a mask on your face for just a little while. I'm going to give you something that will help you to travel comfortably.

(MORE)

ANESTHESIOLOGIST (cont'd)
All you need to do is relax, close
your eyes, breath in as deeply as
can, and count backwards from ten,
like the Guides taught you how to do.
Can you do that for me?

The Subject nods. The Anesthesiologist puts the mask over
her face and turns a valve on a tank. There is a HISS of
flowing gas. After a few seconds he opens her eyes
manually, and checks her pupils with a penlight.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST (cont'd)
(to the Head Surgeon)
She's out.

HEAD SURGEON
Let's begin.

INT. THE OPERATING THEATER - LATER

Sounds of BEEPING DEVICES and ARTIFICIAL BREATHING as the
surgical team goes to work. The Subject has been covered in
a surgical blanket, where a flap has been opened over the
subject's upper thigh.

A deep incision, all the way to bone, has been opened in the
subject's right upper thigh. Clamps have closed off the
femoral artery and vein.

LECTURER (V.O.)
The first stage of the operation
involves the amputation of the
subject's limbs, while clamping off
the large blood vessels that serve
them.

The Head Surgeon takes a rotary electric bone saw from a
NURSE. He turns it on, and it WHIRS. He sets the saw to
upper femur. There is a SAWING NOISE as he severs the bone.

CLOSE-UP ON MINNOW

She flinches at the sawing sound.

BACK TO SCENE

The surgical team removing the subject's right amputated leg
and placing it in an organic waste disposal bin.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - LATER

Minnow sits, frozen in her chair, watching the television. The position of the patch of sunlight on the floor indicates that at least two hours of passed.

INT. THE OPERATING THEATER - LATER

CAMERA TRACKS something being wheeled across the operating theater floor. It looks like a pair of shark's gills in a stainless-steel tub of bubbling water.

CAMERA PULLS back to show the subject, or what is left of her, anyway. Most of her has been excised except her central organ tree and reproductive tract and associated blood vessels. These float in a steel tub of clear fluid.

Three parts of the Subject have yet to be unmolested by the procedure. Her head, at the top of her spine, is still intact. Her breasts and some surrounding tissue are intact, as is her vulva and some other surrounding tissue.

LECTURER (V.O.)

At this point a very sensitive part of the operation takes place.

Members of the surgical team are showing lifting the "shark's gills" out of the tub.

LECTURER (V.O.) (cont'd)

Stem cells taken from the Subject some months before have been induced in a laboratory culture to develop into a set of high-efficiency gills.

The surgical team lowering the gills into the organ tree. The lungs have been removed, while the aorta and venae cavae have been routed into a nearby ECMO machine.

LECTURER (V.O.) (cont'd)

The former pulmonary arteries will provide these gills with a blood supply. Needless to say, without these gills the subject would be incapable of surviving in a deep marine environment.

CLOSE-UP ON MINNOW'S FACE

Frozen with fear and disgust.

LECTURER (O.S.)
(from television)
Additional special cloned
thermogenetic tissues will be
supplied by blood from the former
femoral and subclavian vessels.
These thermogenetic tissues are
necessary to maintain the internal
reproductive and external nursing
environments in deep-sea cold.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - LATER

Minnow is leaning forward in her seat, eyes glued to the television, fascinated and horrified. The progress of the sun across the floor indicates that at least another hour has passed.

LECTURER (O.S.)
(on television)
The major transplantation work done,
the team can now proceed to the
removal of now-superfluous cranial
structures.

ON TELEVISION

The surgeon is holding the electric bone saw again. He places it under the subject's chin in order to saw through the jaw

CLOSE-UP ON MINNOW.

Minnow flinches back and covers her eyes with hands as there is a SAWING-CRACKING SOUND.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - STILL LATER

The movement of the sun suggests another hour passed. Minnow sits slumped in her seat, watching the television but looking almost catatonic.

INT. THE OPERATING THEATER - DAY

The surgical team has lowered a tube onto a transport dolly. The transparent tube about 50 cm in diameter and 150 cm tall, with a dome at the top.

The exposed brain floats in a clear fluid filling the top of the tube at the top of the spinal column.

The central organ tree, minus the lungs but together with gills and additional, unidentifiable tissues, floats in the tube.

In the middle of the tube the Subject's breasts project through two ports. The Subject's vulva is likewise exposed, surrounded by some kind of a seal and beyond that, some sort of expandable plastic.

LECTURER (V.O.)

The surgery complete the subject will be monitored for several weeks while healing on the sutures take place.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT

A dark room in which the tube sits, quietly in its liquid, which bubbles like an aerated aquarium. The tube is hooked up to wires which are hooked to monitors which HUM and PING.

There is enough light that we can see the subject's heart beating in the middle of the organ tree.

LECTURER (V.O.)

Close monitoring for infection or signs or organ failure is undertaken. If after several weeks the subject appears to be in good health...

EXT. AT SEA - DAY

The tube is being lowered into the sea off the side of what looks like a naval corvette.

LECTURER (V.O.)

...it is delivered to the Deep Ones in accord with treaty procedures and obligations.

INT. COTTAGE BATHROOM - DAY

Minnow runs to the toilet and vomits into it.

EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE THE COTTAGE - DAY

Agent Cantor hidden among the trees. He is gazing forward while listening to something on his hand-held radio. Hearn and a number of soldier stand nearby, weapons at the ready.

CANTOR
(putting down radio)
They finally made up their damn
minds.
(to Hearn or the men)
Instructions are to take them in.
Minimum possible force. Let's move
out!

The men begin their move down toward the beach cottage.

INT. THE COTTAGE KITCHEN - DAY

Zoe is serving Minnow a cup of herbal tea. Minnow sits at the table, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. She is rocking back in forth in a state resembling shock.

Suddenly there is BANGING at the front door.

CANTOR (O.S.)
Zoe Moore! Girl called Minnow! This
is Public Security! We have this
house surrounded and we have orders
to take you both into custody.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF THE COTTAGE - DAY

Cantor and Soldier #1 stand on opposite sides of the front door, both with firearms.

CANTOR
Don't make this difficult, ladies.
Don't make this ugly. Whatever
problems there are, they can be
fixed. No harm will come to you if
you just come out with your hands
behind your heads. I promise...

HEARN (O.S.)
(off to one side)
Sir...

SOMEWHAT CLOSE-UP ON HEARN

Hearn is standing off to the side of the house. His heavy pistol is drawn, he's holding it with both hands, pointed downward. He is staring out to sea, a shocked expression on his face.

HEARN

I think you need to come see this,
sir.

EXT. NEAR THE COTTAGE - DAY

Cantor vaults over the cottage porch railing into the scene and stands next to Hearn, joining him in a shocked stare out to sea. A few soldiers with him, also facing out to sea.

Coming in from the sea, emerging from the water and beginning to lope across the beach toward the cottage are a line of Deep Ones. Some of them wear metal belts on which hang numerous metal chakrams.

CANTOR

No...way. By my mother's grave, no
way.

Cantor takes a few steps forward.

CANTOR (cont'd)

(in a commanding
voice)

You...people. You are not allowed
here. By the Treaty of Providence,
you are not allowed on land. You are
to return to your allotted realm
immediately. If you do not do so, we
are prepared to repel you with lethal
armed force.

The Deep Ones continue to advance, ignoring Cantor. Cantor
steps back toward Hearn.

CANTOR (cont'd)

Fire warning shots, Hearn.

HEARN

Yes, sir.

Hearn steps up, raises his pistol in the air and fires BANG.
Then BANG BANG.

A chakram WHIZZES through the air and embeds itself with a
sickening THUD in Hearn's skull. Hearn drops his pistol and
falls back on the sand, dead.

CANTOR

(shouted order)

All forces, open fire on those...
things.

Another chakram CHIKS into Cantor's right leg. He immediately begins bleeding profusely. The soldiers to his side and elsewhere around the house promptly raise their rifles and begin firing RATATATATAA

HELICOPTER SHOT ABOVE THE COTTAGE

A line of Deep Ones advancing out of the sea toward the cottage. There are only a handful of soldiers around the cottage firing at them. Cantor is crawling away toward the front of the house.

Rifle fire is dropping a few of the Deep Ones, but it's clear the humans are badly outnumbered and won't hold off the assault for long.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM

To the hellish RATTLE of rifle fire without, Zoe crawls across the floor, pulls down the pistol in the book safe, and loads it. She has trouble doing this because her hands are shaking.

ZOE

(to herself while
loading the pistol,
as if repeating a
mantra)

Keep firing but save the last bullet
for yourself...keep firing but save
the last bullet for yourself...

EXT. ON THE BEACH - DAY

Soldiers #1 and #2 are firing from prone positions at the advancing line of Deep Ones. A large chakram HISSES over the sand and slices the top of Soldier #1's skull clean off, exposing his brain and killing him instantly.

Soldier #2 rifle jams. He tries momentarily to clear the jam, then realizing that the enemy is almost atop him, drops the rifle and springs to his feet, drawing a combat knife in the process.

Soldier #2 charges at the nearest Deep One, which is holding a stone knife of its own.

SOLDIER #2

Eat this, fucking fish!

The Soldier and the Deep One collide, stabbing one another and collapsing together in the embrace of death.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - DAY

There is a CRASH as a LARGE DEEP ONE breaks through the front door, lopez through the front hallway, and into the living room, where it confronts Zoe, who is holding the pistol.

Zoe holds the pistol properly but is hesitating, terror at this home invasion fighting her disinclination to harm a living thing. The Large Deep One reaches out for her

ZOE

Don't...

MINNOW (O.S.)

No, Zoe, wait...

Minnow enters the scene. She is holding open THE INNSMOUTH DWELLERS. Minnow SPEAKS DEEP ONE LANGUAGE, a sort of sloppy, guttural talk, reading from the book.

The Large Deep One's attention is immediately drawn to Minnow. It BLINKS twice, then MAKES AN UTTERANCE, to which Minnow replies.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE COTTAGE - DAY

Cantor lies in the front of the cottage, a dark trail of blood from his leg wound leading to his position. He can hear through where the front door was. When he hears Minnow's part of the speech o.s. he raises his head.

With his last strength, Cantor pulls out his radio and speaks into it.

CANTOR

Control...we've been attacked. All dead. The flyer...might be a communicattr. Do you copy, control, a communicator. Cantor out.

Cantor dies.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Large Deep One turns and leaves.

ZOE

What...what did you just do?

MINNOW

The language, I learned some from the book. I told the Fishman that I was a priestess under the protection of the God Dagon and that is would be unholy to touch me. At least, that's what I think I said.

ZOE

(indignantly at first)

But that's a lie!

(then uncertain)

It is a lie, right?

EXT. THE COTTAGE AND THE BEACH - DAY

The Large Deep One exits the cottage. Various Deep Ones are standing around. The Large Deep One BARKS A GUTTURAL SENTENCE. The Deep Ones all lope and shamble down to waterline.

All the Deep Ones save one form a circle in the shallows and sit, save for one which quickly wades into deeper water and then dives in and disappears.

INT. THE COTTAGE LIVING ROOM

Zoe stands, now the one looking stunned. Minnow is looking out the window, watching the Deep Ones circle near the shore.

ZOE

I mean, please tell me it's a lie?

MINNOW

I think we need to leave here. Right now.

ZOE

I think they have a vehicle or something.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COTTAGE - DAY

Zoe and Minnow run out of the cottage. Minnow is clearly holding her book. Minnow takes a look at the carnage of dead soldiers and agents and SHUDDERS.

ZOE (O.S.)
Minnow, over here!

Zoe is standing by a military vehicle of some kind, a light truck rather like a Humvee. It is gray-green and has white stars painted on its doors.

INT. THE VEHICLE - DAY

Zoe is sitting in the driver's seat. Minnow piles in to the passenger side.

ZOE
Lucky for us they left the keys in.

MINNOW
You know how to make this thing go?

ZOE
Yes. Is there anything we need to take?

MINNOW
(clutching The Innsmouth Dwellers)
I think this book is the only thing I have that's valuable right now. Where are we going?

Zoe turns the key in the ignition. The vehicle roars to life.

ZOE
I'm a journalist, remember? I know lots of people. We'll find somewhere. Don't worry. Also, with the stars on this thing perhaps local cops won't meddle with us.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

The vehicle drives off.

INT. A MILITARY COMMAND CENTER - DAY

A TECHNICIAN watches a screen on a complex control panel, on which is projected a map. A little red light flashes on part of the map.

CLOSE-UP: THE REAR UNDERCARRIAGE OF THE VEHICLE

A little red light flashes on a box

BACK TO SCENE

The technician signals to her SUPERVISOR, who comes over and takes a look at the screen. Then he picks up a phone on the control panel and puts it to his ear.

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Zoe and Minnow's vehicle is driving through pouring rain. They come to a stop where an accident has occurred. A station wagon has hit a truck and lies slid across the road. The station wagon appears to be burning.

INT. THE VEHICLE - NIGHT

MINNOW

We have to help them.

ZOE

Minnow, we're on the run, and it's hours before we can get to anyplace I know where we'll be safe.

MINNOW

We have to help them, Zoe.

Zoe sighs, shrugs. Opens her door and gets out, followed by Minnow.

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

A HYSTERICAL WOMAN, bleeding from a cut on her head, steps out from behind the station wagon holding what appears to be a swaddled baby.

HYSTERICAL WOMAN

My baby! My baby!

ZOE

(approaching her)

What's wrong with your baby, ma'am?

Zoe walks up close to the Hysterical Woman to look at the baby. The baby is actually a doll, but Zoe doesn't realize this until she's very close.

ZOE (cont'd)
Wait this isn't...

The Hysterical Woman pulls an electric shock device from the small her her back, dropping the "baby," and shocking Zoe with blue bolts of energy. Zoe promptly crumples to the ground.

Minnow advances to her fallen friend.

MINNOW
Zoe!

Two MEN IN NINJA SUITS slip out from the side of the stalled truck and do a coordinate seize, one on each side, of her upper arms. Minnow struggles hard -- she's very strong for a woman her size, but they manage to pin her on the hood of the vehicle.

CLOSE-UP: MINNOW PINNED ON THE HOOD

Her face registers a moment of defeat and despair. There is a CLICK OF HANDCUFFS beings slipped on her wrists.

CLOSE-UP: VEHICLE INTERIOR

A black-gloved hand reaches into the vehicle and plucks THE INNSMOUTH DWELLERS off the front passenger seat.

INT. A CONFINEMENT CELL - DAY

The cell is large with a high ceiling. It contains a simple bunk, a table with a chair, sink, toiled, even a small shower. The walls are baffled against sound and echoes. The cell is brightly lit from above.

Minnow sits on a bed, staring into space. She is wearing a simple orange shift with a pair of slippers.

A DULL CLANK as a slot in the base of bolted door to the cell is opened. A tray with a breakfast -- a surprisingly appetizing one, but served without metal utensils or glassware -- is slid under the door.

Minnow gets up from the bed and picks up the tray, which she then sets on the table. She looks at it for a while, then sits down and slowly begins to eat.

INT. A CONFINEMENT CELL - LATER

Minnow sits at her desk, shredding a paper cup that came with breakfast.

INT. A CONFINEMENT CELL - LATER

Another DULL CLANK as a dinner-like meal is slid under the door. Minnow goes to pick it up.

INT. A CONFINEMENT CELL - LATER

Minnow is sleeping on her cot. The DULL CLANK announces another delivery at her cell. Minnow wakes up, walks to the door and finds a tray with THE INNSMOUTH DWELLERS, a stack of white paper, and a box of writing markers.

Minnow's brow furrows, then she picks up the tray.

MONTAGE: MINNOW CONTINUES HER STUDIES OF DEEP ONE

A sequence of shots showing Minnow making copious notes on the book. At least one shot should be a close-up showing Minnow writing. The other shots can show the floor the cell being covered bit by bit with written page.

INT. A CONFINEMENT CELL - LATER

The DULL CLANK announces another delivery. Two parcels wrapped in fine white paper. Minnow unwraps it and finds a nice dress and shoes, the sort a 1950s high school girl might wear. The other parcel is a clean towel and toiletries.

Minnow stares at these for a while, then removes her shift.

INT. AN INSTITUTIONAL CORRIDOR - DAY

A nicely cleaned-up Minnow is being walked down a corridor between massive GUARD #1 and GUARD #2. She is wearing the dress delivered to her in the previous scene. Her hands and shackled in front of her.

The party walks up to a steel door set in the side of the corridor. Guard #1 goes to an intercom panel and presses button.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT #1 (O.S.)
 (from speaker)
 Yes?

GUARD #1
 This is 6-1-4-0-1. We have the
 subject.

SECRET SERVICEMAN #1 (V.O.)
 (on speaker)
 Passphrase.

GUARD #1
 Truculent canine shame antelope.
 Counterphrase?

SECRET SERVICEMAN #1 (V.O.)
 Gloomy butterfly you are a fish
 raccoon.

GUARD #1
 Acknowledged.

There is a BUZZ and the two guards lead Minnow through the
 door.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A well-appointed, quiet, small conference room, very
 different from the corridor outside. At one end of a wooden
 table polished to a mirror-like finish sits the President
 Beecham. Two huge Secret Service men stand at the back.

There is a neat stack of white paper with handwriting on it
 at the President's right hand.

The two guards leave. Minnow stands silently facing the
 president.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 (with an air of cool,
 determined authority)
 I understand you are Minnow. Sit
 down, Minnow.

Minnow sits slowly, but her gaze does not leave the
 President.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM (cont'd)
 Do you know who I am?

MINNOW
 (with a slightly
 sullen undertone)
 You are the President of the United
 States. I have seen you on
 television.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 Very good. And do you know why you
 are here?

MINNOW
 No.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 There are two reasons. First, you
 are here because humanity is at war.
 The Marine Peoples, or Deep Ones as
 some call them, have invaded a second
 time.

MINNOW
 And why did they do that? We were
 not at war before.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 Someone was attempting to make a
 hydrogen bomb, a weapon so powerful
 that it would mean a threat to the
 Deep Ones even in their own realm.
 This was contrary to the Treaty of
 Providence which secured the peace
 before.

MINNOW
 "Someone?"

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 (stiffly)
 A rogue faction of officers and
 scientists.

MINNOW
 And why would they do such a thing?

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
 They argued that the terms of the
 Treaty of Providence were unjust.
 (MORE)

PRESIDENT BEECHAM (cont'd)
That some of its requirements,
particularly the system that produces
and delivers young women to help the
Deep Ones meet their...reproductive
requirements were cruel and
degrading, and that they only way to
achieve their end would be...

MINNOW
(voice rising)
They weren't wrong! I've seen the
moving pictures of your so-called
surgical conversion. The only thing
I could think of was a butcher's
shop.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
(voice rising to
counter)
I don't intend to argue the justice
of procedures necessary for our
survival. It...

MINNOW
(voice still louder)
One of those young women would have
been my sister!

There is a moment's painful silence.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
I am sorry. I am sorry for your
sister, and I am sorry because what
is now about to follow will be even
more difficult.

(takes a breath,
composing herself)
The second reason why you are here is
that we have reason to believe that,
unlike any other human we know about,
you have figured out the workings of
the Deep Ones' language.

President Beecham plucks a paper from the stack at her right
hand and holds it up. It's clear that it is part of
Minnow's notes made before.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM (cont'd)
Could this be true?

MINNOW
I think so. I have always had a
knack for making sense of things.
(MORE)

MINNOW (cont'd)

I taught myself how to read on a plantation, you know. But still, what does this have to do with me?

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

Minnow, the war with the Deep Ones is going badly. We have managed to avoid making the obvious mistakes of our predecessors in the last war, and our weapons are better, but the Deep Ones themselves are very numerous, and they too have adapted. The generals and admirals whom I command have advised me that if things do not change, we might not last more than a few more months.

Minnow nods in comprehension.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM (cont'd)

We need a negotiator. Someone who can reach the Deep Ones and try to get them to come to a new understanding. But no one we know, not our finest diplomats or scholars, has been able to do so so far. But if you have a command of their strange language, maybe you can succeed where others have.

(pause, amps up the earnestness)

I know that it is a hard thing to ask. I don't deny that you, your family, your whole people, have suffered unfairly. I can only ask you to try to look past that and understand that however bad things have been, they will be incomparably worse -- for everyone -- if this war does not end soon. And that is why I am asking for your help.

Minnow sits deep in thought.

MINNOW

My mother and baby sister? Dr. Moore and Zoe?

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

They are all in custody, of course. But I assure you they have not been harmed and will not be, can be restored to liberty even, if you try to help us.

Minnow pauses, thinks some more.

MINNOW

If I help you, will you end the system? The plantations, the operations, all of that?

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

Those are conditions we face because of the demands of the Deep Ones. I don't deny that the system is unjust and cruel. I really don't. But sometimes the price of life is choosing the lesser evil. So unless you think that a different arrangement is possible...

MINNOW

If you're willing to let me try, then I will be willing to help you.

EXT. TENT A MARSHY FIELD - DAY

A tent has been set up in the middle of a field. Rain beats down hard on the canvas. Minnow and the President, accompanied by soldiers, including the CHIEF OF STAFF, stand at a table under the tent.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

Here, General?

CHIEF OF STAFF

This is as close as we can get to the battle zone safely, Madam President.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM

All right. Minnow, do what you can.

A SOLDIER sets up a microphone in front of Minnow, who composes herself, takes a deep breath, and speaks a DEEP ONE GIBBERISH PHRASE into the microphone. She then repeats the phrase.

MONTAGE: THE PHRASE BEING BROADCAST

-- A loudspeaker being pointed out of a trench by some soldiers, repeating Minnow's phrase.

-- A loudspeaker mounted on a tank driving through a wrecked town, repeating Minnow's phrase.

-- A submarine moving through murky depths, repeating Minnow's phrase.

EXT, TENT IN A MARSHY FIELD - LATER

Minnow still repeating her phrase. Her voice is beginning to sound a little hoarse, and she looks tired.

OFFICER #1
Motion in the treeline, sir.

CHIEF OF STAFF
Everyone to hold fire, repeat,
everyone to hold fire. That's the
strictest order!

From out of the distance a group of deep ones emerge. In the lead is the LEAD DEEP ONE wearing a sort of elaborate metal tiara of the kind described in "The Shadow over Innsmouth."

The Lead Deep One stops just short of the tent and looks inward. There is a tense moment of standoff, then President Beecham steps forward.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
I am the President of the United
States. On behalf of the people of
the United States and the land masses
of Planet Earth, I welcome you to
this negotiation.

Minnow speaks a stream of Deep One, presumably translating these remarks. The Lead Deep One responds to this with what sound like a few GUTTERAL BARKS.

MINNOW
The Exalted Archpriestess of Dagon
insists that all leave here except
for me.

CHIEF OF STAFF
What? Now wait a minute...

President Beecham cuts him off with a hand gesture.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
We shall do as she asks.

CHIEF OF STAFF
(pauses before
adjusting to the
realities of rank)
You heard the President! Make it so.
Clear to 500 meters.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
(touching Minnow's
arm)
Good luck, Minnow.

MINNOW
Thank you, Madam President.

EXT. TENT IN ANOTHER MARSHY FIELD - NIGHT

Under a different tent soldiers are peering through various forms of surveillance equipment. President Beecham approaches the Chief of Staff.

UNIDENTIFIED BROADCAST VOICE (O.S.)
(muffled, in
background)
Ceasefire...still holding...
unclear...

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
Report, General.

CHIEF OF STAFF
They're still at it, Madam President.

The Chief of Staff hands President Beecham an infrared viewer and gestures for her to look through it.

EXT. INFRARED VIEWER - NIGHT

The tent, under which Minnow stands, speaking and gesturing Warm-blooded Minnow stands out as a bright red, well-defined silhouette, while the cold-blooded Deep Ones appear just as bluish smudges.

PREISDENT BEECHAM (O.S.)
They've been at this for more than
twelve hours...wait...

The blue smudges retreat from the tent, while Minnow approaches.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM (O.S.)
They might have something.

EXT. TENT IN ANOTHER MARSHY FIELD - NIGHT

Minnow arrives, under cover of a tarp held up by soldiers. She's still soaking wet and looks exhausted. She is carrying what appears to be a portfolio.

President Beecham steps forward to greet Minnow.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
Minnow! What happened?

MINNOW
I think we might have a new agreement.

Excited HUBBUB under the tent among the soldiers.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
Can you summarize?

MINNOW
There can be peace consistent with some changes in how our country works. I made notes...

Minnow hands her portfolio to President Beecham, who takes out the notes and begins reading through them. The only sound that can be heard is RAIN POUNDING on the tent canvas.

President Beecham frowns.

PRESIDENT BEECHAM
Do you really think you can make this happen?

MINNOW
I got Fishmen to listen to me. Perhaps people will as well.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Minnow sits on a simple set, such as one from which a news broadcast might be made.

She is now wearing a women's version of the uniform of a Captain in the U.S. Navy. Her hair has been done to make her look less wild girl, more demure and sweet girl next door.

We see her first at distance, with an intervening camera and a BROADCAST DIRECTOR.

BROADCAST DIRECTOR
You're on in five...four...

The broadcast director then signals 3, 2, 1 with his hand.

INT. TELEVISION BROADCAST - NIGHT

Minnow addresses the camera.

MINNOW
Ladies and Gentlemen and children
here in America and across the world.
Thank you for tuning in to me
tonight. My name is Minnow. I am a
girl who grew up on one of the
plantations who ended up working to
bring about the armistice that now
prevails between humanity and the
Deep Ones. I am here tonight to
discuss President Beecham's proposal
to dismantle the plantation system
and replace it with volunteer
service.

INT. A FAMILY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An upper middle-class Black family watch Minnow's address on television.

MINNOW (O.S.)
(on television)
I understand that it is traditional
to argue that the plantation system
is the most humane use for white
people available. Many people have
yet to fully adapt to the full horror
of the means through which the Deep
Ones have been provided with their
required human mates. I beg you to
understand that a country that can do
to young women what was done to so
many, including my own sister, can
not be proud of itself as a country.
(MORE)

MINNOW (O.S.) (cont'd)
Nor can it be proud of confining
millions of human beings, mostly
women and children, in a primitive
world where they are made to live out
lies about the reason they are there.

INT. A MILITARY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A large ward, where mostly Black and Asian nurses are
tending grievously wounded men. Televisions are available
around the ward to watch, and the people in it stop what
they are doing and watch.

MINNOW (O.S.)
(on television)
President Beecham has proposed a new
order in which instead of raising
young women like crops to serve the
Deep Ones, that we raise volunteers
for service instead. Their service
would be like that of soldiers, who
make sacrifices of their own well-
being, perhaps even of their own
lives, to defend their communities.
The Deep Ones are willing to accept a
new treaty under which permanent
peace will be restored should their
quota of mates be routinely met.

INT. A CHURCH SANCTUARY ON A PLANTATION - DAY

The sanctuary strongly resembles that where Minnow heard
sermons growing up. It is full of an audience of women and
girls. Minnow's address is being projected on a movie
screen.

MINNOW (O.S.)
(on television)
In calling for volunteers were are
drawing on what is noblest in young
women, the impulse to sacrifice to
allow humanity to continue. Women
have always faced death and suffering
in childbirth, and without childbirth
the human race would go extinct.
Jesus tells us in John 15:13 that
"Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his
friends."

(MORE)

MINNOW (O.S.) (cont'd)
I would not want to amend Jesus, save
to note that women who will lay down
their lives for the rest of humanity
must have at least a great a love as
than.

MURMURING of agreement and approval in the sanctuary.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN A JAPANESE HOUSE - DAY

A Japanese family watches Minnow's address. We should see
the screen at some point, where Minnow's speech will be
giving accurate subtitles in Japanese.

MINNOW (O.S.)
(on television)
Two thousand years ago, the Greek
orator Demosthenes gave a funeral
oration for fallen soldiers in which
he praised three young women from
Athens, the daughters of Leos,
Praxithea, Theope, and Eubule, who
allowed themselves to be sacrificed
to save Athens from a plague.
Demosthenes noted how soldiers of his
own time had been inspired by their
heroic example: "When, therefore,
such courage was displayed by those
women, they looked upon it as a
heinous thing if they, being men,
should have proved to possess less of
manhood."

INT. TELEVISION BROADCAST - DAY

Minnow concludes her speech.

MINNOW
My conscience is clear, therefore, in
calling for volunteers for Deep One
service. It is not a disgusting
thing. It is not an immoral thing.
It is a noble thing. But one thing
more. I would never ask anyone to do
this thing if I were not willing to
do it myself.

Minnow reaches into her uniform tunic and pulls out a white
card with writing on it, holding it up to the camera.

MINNOW (cont'd)

This morning I filled out my volunteer card, had a physical, and swore my oath. I am the first volunteer. I hope that there will be many to follow me. Thank you and good night.

INT. THE PLANTATION HALL - DAY

Minnow, in her captain's uniform, cuddles baby Laura, who gurgles and coos, before handing her back to Mother Katherine. Grandmother Rose sits next to Mother Katherine.

MOTHER KATHERINE

I don't understand why you left us, Minnow. And I don't understand why you are leaving again.

MINNOW

I left because I had to, mama. I left because I had to know about the world and no one could or would tell me. And I have to leave again so Baby Laura can have a world to grow up in where she can know the truth about the world and not have to be... sacrificed against her will.

MOTHER KATHERINE

(begins to cry)

I don't think I can bear losing two little girls...

MINNOW

My service is not forever. Only until menopause.

MOTHER KATHERINE

Meno...meno...

MINNOW

It's when a woman stops having her womanly flow when she's older. Which means there is a time when I can come back.

Mother Katherine SOBS audibly.

MINNOW (cont'd)

Think of this, mama. I will come back one day.

(MORE)

MINNOW (cont'd)

And Laura will be all grown up by then. She'll have gone to school and know how to read and all. And she'll have both a little house of her own and babies of her own. And you and I will play with my little nieces and nephews. I can read them stories. You can cook.

Mother Katherine nods, trying to master her feelings.
Mother Katherine hands Baby Laura to Grandmother Rose.
Mother Katherine and Minnow embrace.

EXT. AIRSTRIP ON A TROPICAL ISLAND - DAY

Minnow, together with Zoe and a multi-ethnic complement of 40 or so healthy, attractive-looking young women in surplus army fatigues stand on the cement airstrip among pallets of supplies. A transport aircraft stands in the background.

Minnow makes a gesture with her hand. The transport starts its engines and heads toward the end of the runway.

ZOE

That's the last of them. We're on our own now.

MINNOW

Only brief stops for supplies and volunteers. Military personnel otherwise banned from the island. The place is now ours. Or ours and theirs, anyway.

(pauses)

I can't believe you volunteered, Zoe. Didn't you want to be a journalist?

ZOE

Someone has to keep my best friend out of trouble.

Minnow smiles and shakes her head. Then she turns to the various young women and issues an order.

MINNOW

Okay, ladies, lets move these supplies and set up camp. We have a big day tomorrow.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The young women have set up tents in a clearing. In the center there is a large fire around which they all sit, singing "Make New Friends."

EXT. RAIN FOREST AND ADJACENT BEACH - DAY

In pre-dawn light a line of young women, all wearing only white towels and sandals, walk along a path through the trees down to the beach. When they reach the beach, they line up, facing out to sea.

Zoe and Minnow are in the middle of the line.

MINNOW
(an order for all to
hear)
Drop towels!

They do, and now stand naked facing the sea.

A line of Deep Ones emerges from the water and begins to wade through the surf toward the line of young women. About five meters apart, the line halts.

The Deep Ones are male, and sporting marked erections of whatever their reproductive organs are.

The two groups look at each other somewhat awkwardly, like the boys' and girls' groups at a junior high school dance.

Minnow and Zoe look at one another, then step forward.

FADE TO BLACK.